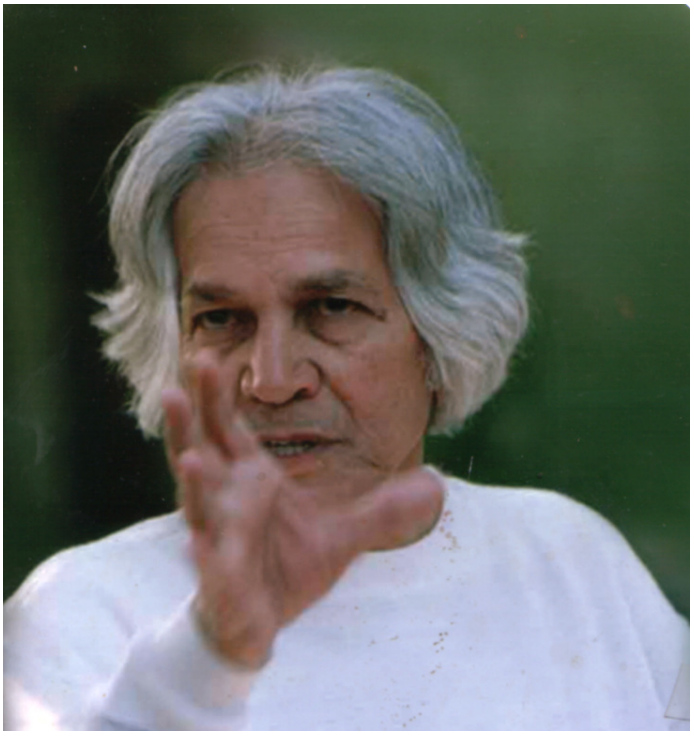
The Seed beneath the Volcano

A Dramatized Biography
of



U.G.Krishnamurti

By

Rajasekhara Reddi Kollukuduru

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"All autobiographies are lies and biographies are double lies".

--U.G.

"An artist is a craftsman like any other craftsman.He uses that tool to express himself. All art is a pleasure movement ".

--U.G.

"And still I don't succeed
I feel it, and yet I can't understand it.
I can not retain it nor forget it
And if I grasp it I can not measure it."

-- Richard Wagner(Meister singer)

"Not a day passes over the earth, but men and women of no note do great deeds, speak great words, and suffer noble sorrows. Of these obscure heroes, philosophers, and martyrs, the greater part will never be known till that hour, when many that are great shall be small, and the small great; but of others the world's knowledge may be said to sleep: their lives and characters lie hidden from nations in the annals that record them. The general reader cannot feel them, they re presented so curtly and coldly: they are not like breathing stories appealing to his heart, but little historic hailstones striking him but to glance off his blossom: nor can he understand them: for epitomes are not narrative, as skeletons are not human figures.

Thus records of prime truths remain a dead letter to plain folk; the writers have left so much to the imagination, and imagination is so rare a gift. Here, then, the writer of fiction may be of use to the public – as an interpreter".

-- ***Charles Reade***
In his " The Cloister and the Hearth"

"*All men of whatsoever quality they may be, who have done anything of excellence or which may properly resemble excellence, ought, if they are 'persons of truth' and honesty to describe their life with their own hand".*

-- Benvenuto Cellini(1500-1571)
Italian Monk

"The fiction which resembles truth is better than the truth which is disserved from the imagination"

- Nizami
(Persian Poet)

To My Parents

Sesha Reddy Kollukudru (1914 – 1986)
Superintendent of Customs & Central Excise

Siva Kameswaramma Kollukuduru (1920 – 1998)
Poetess & Authoress

Editor's Note

U. G. brought to me the first volume of this work in manuscript form one day in the beginning of 2006 for editing. I read much of it that night and discussed it with him the following morning. I told him that the biography contained material which was not found elsewhere and agreed to edit it. But I warned him that as there were too many embellishments as well as some material not quite relevant, I might have to cut its length drastically. I edited all the four volumes of the biography reducing it to about half of its original length, making it more concise and readable. Still, a few people who had read the manuscript complained of inaccuracies, especially regarding UG's "one night stand", his encounter with "Linda" in Paris and so on. Only yesterday a friend reported an inaccuracy about the Buddha's implied teaching about there being no incarnations. I expressed my concerns to Mr. Reddy and he replied as follows: (Excerpted from his e-mail. I have edited his reply slightly to make it more readable.)

> *2. The incident of UG's meeting the millionairess in Paris is absolutely correct beyond doubt. This information I obtained from Chandrasekhar's old diaries. Apart from that when UG was in Yercaud he casually said "I met that woman again in Paris". Who? He said that "Texas b..." I was there. Even Mr. Mukunda Rao's book, The Other Side Of Belief, Interpreting UG Krishnamurti, contains this incident in page 116.*
>
> *3. I borrowed the description of Switzerland mainly from* A Travel Guide To Europe *and* A Tourist Guide to Switzerland *from a local travel agency. I also read the Swiss Author Hermann Hesse's Novel* Steppenwolf *in which he described vividly the natural beauty of the Alps. I may be incorrect in some aspects.*
>
> *4. When people read my book to UG (it was totally raw and rough, unedited, and full of spelling mistakes, containing only 130 pages) it covered only his childhood incidents and minglings. It was about these that he raised the question "Is it about me he is writing?" I heard about this from Usha. Later, when UG was in Bangalore he asked me '"How could you collect all that information about my childhood, which I cannot remember even remotely?' I explained to him that all that information came to me from his elder cousins. I don't think he enquired about the latter parts of the story which I have never put on the internet.*
>
> *5. I obtained all the information about the London scene – about the Kedan Square flat thief incident, the shifting to a hotel, the Commonwealth Club, his Pakistani Friends (I only concocted their names), the Ramakrishna Ashram, and about his London roaming – from Chandrasekhar's dairies, and Dr. Machiraju Ramana's relatives (who helped UG's financially) .*
>
> *6. In the Geneva Scene, the meetings with the Vice-Consul and Swami Ghanananda are correct. But the conversations between the Vice-Consul and others and Valentine's incident are all from my poetic imagination.*

I am not in a position to confirm the accuracy of some of the incidents described in the book. At the time of editing, some descriptions (as for example in Switzerland) seemed imagined to me. That's why I chose A *Dramatized Biography* as subtitle for the book.

Regardless of the above caveat, I sincerely believe that the reader will find the book interesting and providing an in-depth glance into UG's life prior to his Calamity.

Seaside, Narayana Moorty
November 30, 2011

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Author's Note

In his *Summing Up*, the great British author Somerset Maugham said, "My language was common place, my vocabulary limited, my grammar shaky and my phrases hackneyed. But to write was an instinct that seems as natural to me as to breathe." The same line of thought applies to me. My creativity blossomed at a very early age. Many people had expected that I would make a great mark. But mysteriously my creativity went dormant for 50 years. Yes, I was demoralized and disoriented for more than half my life.

I have always subscribed to the idea that everyone's life is a road to his self-realization or self-discovery. In my case, self-realization means simply self-expression. Exploration of myself is also exploration of the world at large.

I had a checkered career drifting in different activities. All my efforts to establish myself as a creative artist proved infertile and unrewarding. I lost the vital thread somewhere along the line. As a result, I was running through a gamut of emotional highs and lows experiencing humiliation, frustration, depression, anger and resentment followed by mental aberration. I lived a castaway existence. I lost my core identity, an 'existential angst' enveloped me and a suicidal complex knocked at my door. Time passed. All doors closed on me. Suddenly I was ushered through a spiritual door, not by choice but by force. I encountered Jillellamudi Amma, J.Krishnamurti, U.G.Krishnamurti and a host of others. Again, I was suffocated by a spiritual imbroglio. I was in great doubt and dilemma at the crossroads.

To quote French poet Verlaine:

You may grind his soul in the mill
Bend him heart and brow
But the poet will follow rainbow!

In spite of so much dense darkness suddenly a ray of light had managed to streak through me. As Victor Hugo, the great French novelist had said, 'No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come.' My mental orchestra was finally tuned for some unusual expression. At the beginning I fumbled, but grabbed the opportunity with both hands. Then I cashed on U.G.'s life story as an anchor to emerge from the creative limbo to rediscover, redefine and reorient myself. I am not trying to convey anything to anyone. I am only proving a point to myself, namely, that nobody could venture this except me. This satisfaction alone will suffice, as I prefer to be in a low key ~ I do not hunger for fame or fortune.

As I was condemned to my freedom of loneliness, sitting all alone isolated, racking my brains in the depths of the crucible of creative journey, an excruciating torture, an endless struggle settled on me like a paralyzing frost. It was a daunting task, a passion of deadly nature. I was caught between the devil and the deep sea.

I always affirm that any man of creativity undergoes an unspeakable trauma to reach his cherished goal, never visible to his sight, as he is prodded on to perfection till his last breath.

At last, I have completed this mega story through a grueling fourteen years, with my whole being focused on the nib of my pen with a great soul force. My forehead oozed more blood than sweat.

The book went through several drafts and changes were made repeatedly as fresh information poured in, even at the fag end. It was finally metamorphosed into the present shape.

This biographical novel was based on certain facts, events and incidents, culled from several personal interviews over many years. The interpretation, including presentation, narration and dramatization, is of my own creative imagination.

I neither intend nor hope that this biography will add anything to U.G. or his line of philosophy. It is not an authorized biography approved by anyone, including U.G.

If I have knowingly or unknowingly wounded any one's feelings in this biography in any manner let me kowtow before them and beg their pardon.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply beholden to:

Mr. Vemuri Narasimha Rao, a younger cousin of U.G., a genuine Theosophist and a true *karma yogi,* who unfurled the ringside view of facts and figures. He was my lodestar. Without him I would not have completed this crucible of creative adventure.

And:

Late Ammanabrolu Minakshi, an elder cousin of U.G., who also played a pivotal role by recapitulating a multiplicity of details of U.G.'s childhood days and other relevant information.

My very special heartfelt thanks to the following persons for their unstinted help and co-operation in unfolding the life-events and incidents of U.G.'s life as they had known them personally or heard about them:

Mrs. P. Bharati Rayudu, Mrs. Usha Narasimha Rao, (both daughters of U.G.) Mrs. Mallapragada Bharatamma (U.G.'s half sister), the late Mrs. T. Kamala Kumari, the late Mrs. K. Rajyalakshmi, the late Machiraju Sambasiva Rao, the late Dr. T. Seshagiri Rao (U.G.'s brother-in-law), Mr. Atluri Venkateswara Rao, the late Dr. T. Kameswara Rao, Mrs. Kanakaratnamma of Eluru, Mrs. Nancharamma of Poolla, Mrs. Venkateswaramma of Eluru, the late Mr. Madhava Sarma of Tenali, the late Achanta Suryanarayana and the late Mr. Patri Gopalakrishna, (both Theosophists).

A special mention should be made of following persons:

Mr. Korlimarla Chandrashekar, with whom I have a rare camaraderie, for his motivation and succor; Mr. Munagala Prabhakar of Osmania University, who was my core psychological and emotional anchor; Mr. Gopala Krishna for his encouragement and soothing sermons; Mr. Harjeet Singh Chatwal, who stood like a Gibraltar Rock through thick and thin; Mr. M. G. Rao of the Indian Railways, who glued with me and goaded me to script on a bigger canvas for this novel; Dr. Mrs. Sharmila and D. V. Bhaskara Sastry, who were destined to pave the guiding path; Prof. O. S. Reddy, the internationally renowned geneticist and my maternal uncle, from whom I have inherited a tinge of creativity, for his valuable suggestions; and Dr. A. Jhansilakshmi, a clinical psychologist, on her outstanding co-operation which needs no elaboration as she was my spiritual soul mate.

Y.V. Subbareddy and his wife Y. Swarnalatha Reddy, for boosting my morale when my chips were down; T. Purushottama Rao, former Minister in the Government of Andhra Pradesh and a spiritual pathfinder, for his inspiration, M.Chittaranjan (I.T.C), who has been synonymous with true friendship over the years; and Julie Thayer of New York, for her animated support behind the screen.

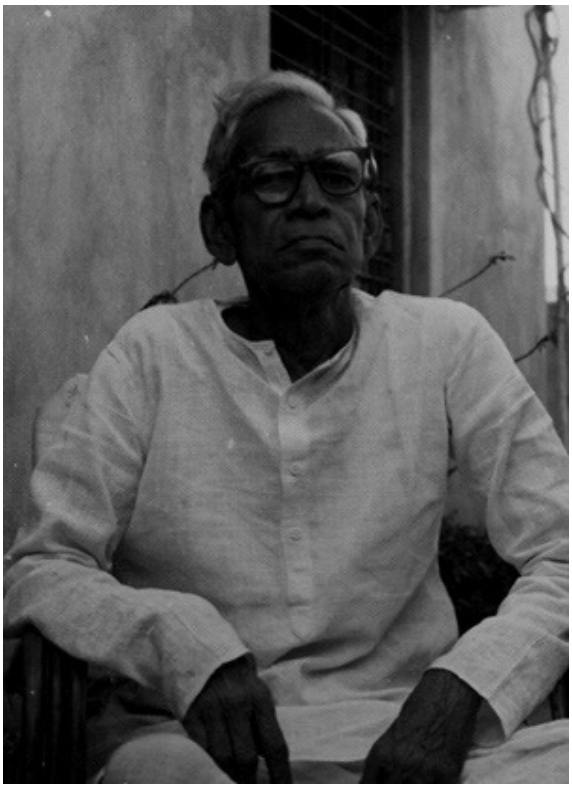
I have been fortunate to find the help of Dr. J.S.R.L. Narayana Moorty, retired professor of philosophy settled in America; he went through the script meticulously and made expert editorial changes; he thereby became my linchpin. I can't find a more kindred spirit than in him.

My thanks to my son K.S. Harshavardhan Reddy, my daughter Dr. K.S. Kirti Priya and her husband Prashant Kumar Gona for their love and loyalty.

My appreciation to my housekeepers Mrs. Kavitha, Pushpalatha, Nagamani and Ramesh, who rendered their services unconditionally, followed by Lalitha, K.Praveen Yadav and K. Mahesh Yadav who continue their ministrations.

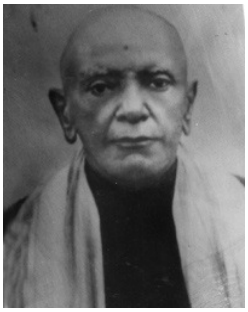
Last but not the least, my grateful appreciation to U.G.'s himself and his books, particularly *The Mystique of Enlightenment*, from which I have quoted extensively. No one can adequately describe the occurrences during the period of the Calamity as well as U.G. can. I let his own words flow through.

Uppaluri Bharathamma
U.G.'s Mother

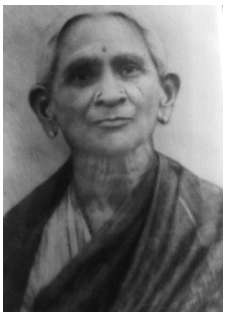


Uppaluri Seetaramaiah
U.G.'s father

(Photo Courtsey: Mallapragada Bharathamma)



Tummalapalli Gopalakrishna Murthi (Pantulu)
U.G.'s maternal grandfather



Durgamma
U.G's maternal grandmother

U.G. with his grandparents (circa 1935)

U.G. in 1950

U.G in London, 1953

V. Narasimharao
U.G's younger cousin

U.G.'s Meternal grand mother Durgamma with Rukmini Arundale (1943)

U.G.'s elder cousin Ammanabrolu Meenakshamma
(*Photo Courtesy : her daughter Bharathamma*)

Valentine De Kervin

(Photo courtesy: K. Chandrasekhar)

1. The Fall of a Fire Thunderbolt

A landmark in history, a model of religious life and the very storehouse of civilization and culture is the Telugu Country, the *karma nadu* (field of action) or the land where many a spiritual adventures has taken place. The present Krishna District is a main chunk of this historic region, and Machilipatnam or Bandar (which is derived from "*bandargah*", meaning "sea port') has been the headquarters of the District. It is said that Mahavira, the last Tirthankara of the Jaina tradition, visited this area. In the bygone era Buddhism and Jainism flourished as state religions in this region.

On 9th July 1918, a male child was born at 6:12 am to Srimati Bharati, daughter of Sri Tummalapalli Gopala Krishna Murty of Gudiwada and wife of Sri Sitaramayya of Tenali, at the residence of Sri Vemuri Chinnayya Rao in Godugupeta, Machilipatnam.

According to the Indian calendar, the year was *Kalayukta,* the month *ashadha* and the date *suddha padyami,* the first day of the lunar month; *punarvasu nakshatram* was the birth constellation in the Indian zodiac.

The child was christened Gopala Krishnamurti, the future U.G., "U" standing for the surname "Uppaluri". He would later be acclaimed as a world teacher whose philosophy would earn for him the sobriquet of a "radical revolutionary beyond any logical comprehension".

Now follows his ancestral background.

2. Fast Forward

The Seven Wonders in Seven Stages

The number seven has played a pivotal role in the life of U.G. ever since he was born. U.G. noticed during the week following the "explosion" some fundamental changes in the functioning of his senses. The stage was set for seven baffling events:

On the First Day:

U.G. noticed that his skin was so soft that it felt like silk and also had a peculiar kind of glow, a golden glow. He was shaving and each time he ran the razor down his face, it slipped. He changed blades but it did not make any difference. He touched his face. His sense of touch was different.

On the Second Day:

He became aware for the first time that his mind was in a "declutched state". He was upstairs in the kitchen where Valentine had prepared some tomato soup. He looked at it and did not know what it was. She told him it was tomato soup. He tasted it and then he recognized it. 'That is how tomato soup tastes.' He swallowed the soup and he was back in the odd frame of mind; rather it was the frame of "no mind". He asked Valentine again, 'What is that?' Again she said it was tomato soup. Again U.G. tasted it. Again he swallowed and forgot what it was. He played with this for some time. It was such a funny business, this "declutched state".

On the Third Day:

Some friends of U.G. invited themselves over for dinner. He agreed to cook for them. But somehow he could not smell or taste properly. He became gradually aware that these two senses had been transformed. Every time some odor, whether it was from an expensive perfume or from cow dung, entered his nostril, it irritated his olfactory nerves in just about the same way – it was the same irritation. And then, every time he tasted something, he tasted only the dominant ingredient – the taste of other ingredients came slowly later. From that moment on, perfume made no sense to him and spicy food had no appeal for him. He could taste only the dominant spice, chili or whatever it was.

On the Fourth Day:

Something happened to his eyes. U.G. and his friends were at the Rialto Restaurant in Gstaad. It was here that U.G. became aware of a tremendous "vista vision", like in a concave mirror.

Things were coming toward him, or moving into him, as it were. And things going away from him seemed to move out from inside of him. It was such a puzzle to him – as if his eyes were a gigantic camera, changing focus without his doing anything.

Similarly, U.G. was able to see everything very clearly. He could see even minute particles with total clarity; he could even count the hairs of the people in the hotel.

When U.G. returned from the restaurant, he looked in the mirror to find that there was something odd about his eyes – they were fixed. He kept looking at the mirror for a long time and observed that his eyelids were not blinking. For almost forty five minutes he stared into the mirror – still no blinking of the eyes[1]. Instinctive blinking was over for him and it still is.

For some other reason, drops of tears secreted from the corners of his eyes.[2]

On the Fifth Day:

U.G. noticed a change in his hearing. When he heard the barking of a dog, the barking seemed to originate inside him. All sounds seemed to come from within him and not from outside. They still do.

The five senses changed in five days.

On the Sixth Day:

U.G. was lying on a sofa. Valentine was in the kitchen. And suddenly his body disappeared. There was no body there. He looked at his hand; he looked at it – 'Is this my hand?' There was no actual question; but the whole situation was somewhat like that. So he touched his body: nothing. He did not feel that there was anything except the touch, the point of contact. Then he called Valentine and asked, 'Do you see my body on this sofa'? She touched it and said, 'This is your body.' And yet that did not give him any assurance. He said to himself: 'What is this funny business? My body is missing.' His body had gone away and has never come back.

On the Seventh Day:

U.G. was lying on the same sofa, relaxing, enjoying the "declutched state". Valentine would come in and he would recognize her as Valentine. She would go out of the room; then, finish, blank – Valentine was nowhere. He would think, 'What is this?' He could not even imagine what Valentine had looked like.

He would listen to the sounds coming from the kitchen and ask himself: 'What are those sounds coming from inside of me?' But he could not relate to them. He had discovered that all his senses were without a coordinating mechanism inside himself; the coordinator was missing. Then, he felt something happening inside of him: the life energy drawing to a focal point from different parts of his body. He said to himself: 'Now you have come to the end of your life. You are going to die.' Then he called Valentine and said, 'I am going to die, Valentine, and you will have to do something

with the body. Hand it over to the doctors; may be they will use it. I don't believe in burning or burial. In your own interest you have to dispose off this body. One day it will stink. So, why not give it away?'

Valentine replied, 'U.G., you are a foreigner. The Swiss Government won't take your body. Forget about it.'

The dreadful movement of U.G.'s life-force came to a focal point. Valentine's bed was empty. He moved over and stretched out on it, getting ready to die.

A person who does not fear anything in the world still trembles when death touches him. He tries to save himself in a number of ways. The desire or will to survive persists strongly. But U.G. did not feel any such fear. He took the issue of death very casually.

Valentine ignored what was going on. She left. But before she left she said, 'One day you say this thing has changed, another day you say that thing has changed and a third day you say something else has happened. What is all this, U.G.? And now you say you are going to die. You are not going to die. You are all right, hale and healthy.'

In U.G. 'then a point arrived where it looked as if the aperture of a camera was trying to close itself.' It is the only simile he could think of. The aperture was trying to close itself and something was there trying to keep it open. Then after a while there was no will to do anything, not even to prevent the aperture from closing itself. Suddenly, it closed. He did not know what happened after that. Life conked out.

This process –the process of dying – lasted for forty-nine minutes.

***

U.G. Krishnamurti, who was born on the 9th of July 1918 to Bharati in the house of Vemuri Chinnayya Rao, in Godugupeta, Machilipatnam, is now physically dead, literally dead, in the village of Saanen in Switzerland.

The description of the process of forty-nine minutes of death is entirely different from the way it had actually occurred. In fact, this process that had happened at that time was beyond any description, because there was nobody there, thinking in such terms.

In this connection two important points should be observed. "Something" was there trying to keep it open. What was that "something"?

That "something", from the inner layers, was trying its utmost to stop the closure of the aperture. What it was is not known. At any cost, it had struggled to face death till the end. The desire to do something was missing in U.G. The will to prevent the closure of the aperture evaporated.

From the inner layers this mysterious something fought tooth and nail to overcome the aperture to the last minute and failed. It lost its battle against death.

The first point to be observed here is that the will or volition to prevent the closure of the aperture was missing.

The second point is that even if the will or desire had been there in U.G., there was still no idea of coming back, since the entity of the self was missing. That means there was no desire to become alive again.

Form this it can be inferred that there was some unknown thing distinct from the will and desire. Perhaps it was the body machine with its self-propelling capacity (as an independent and autonomous entity) that fought to protect itself with its own energy, gathering and garnering all its hidden powers together and battled with "death" for forty-nine minutes in a thousand ways. In other words, the self-built, self-propelling body (as a special and separate entity) has its own power and is distinct from the person living in the "thought sphere" (may be as an in-built internal ventilator). This is only a speculation on my part.

To return to U.G.'s "death": his hands and feet became cold, his body became stiff, his heart beat slowed down, his breathing slowed down and there was a gasping for breath. Up to a point, he was there – his breath, his last breath, as it were; and then he was finished. What happened after that, nobody knows. There was nobody there to describe it.

Valentine was petrified at the change in U.G.'s body. An hour ago he talked to her and now he was …. How could it be? She touched his body. It was cold as a block of ice. His legs and hands were stiff like sticks, and his eyes were firmly closed. His pulse was no longer throbbing. Was he dead? She did not want to believe or accept what had happened to U.G. in her very presence.

How did U.G. die so suddenly? For the past one week U.G.'s behavior was abnormal and odd. Valentine looked helplessly at the dead body. An eerie silence fell on the room.

At this juncture, all of a sudden, breaking the horrifying atmosphere, the telephone downstairs shrilled like a war-drum. The tiny siskin who missed her route was hopping on the window sill. When the phone sounded, it flew off blindly. Who could be calling at this hour?

The landlady answered the phone and shouted, 'Monsieur Krishnamurti, telephone for you from your friend.'

Valentine came back to her senses. She looked at the dead body of U.G with shuddering looks and gathered her energy to rush downstairs to receive the phone.

'This is Douglas speaking from Gstaad. I want to talk to U.G.,' said the baritone voice.

'No, Douglas, I am sorry, he can't come to the phone,' she answered feebly.

'What has happened to him? Please call him urgently. I must talk to him right now,' he insisted in a firm voice.

'No, Douglas, something happened to U.G. His body is not moving,' she muttered timidly.

'Is something the matter? What's up? For some reason, I feel that I have to talk to him,' he pleaded.

Valentine tried to give some excuse in her own way. But Douglas was not in a mood to listen her. This went on ....

At that time on the second floor where U.G. was lying dead, a miracle had happened.

For U.G. who was in eternal sleep, the sound waves of the telephone worked as an awakening call. The limbs of his corpse began to show a pulse. There was a microscopic movement in the entire body. It was like the blossoming of a hundred-petaled lotus in quick motion.

The body of U.G became alive and kicking as if it went through a transmigration for a short period.

U.G., who was dead literally physically a few minutes ago, was resuscitated back to life. It was an automatic bodily process. U.G. became conscious and he touched life. Gradually all his energies were restored. The body of U.G. spontaneously took a heavy breath.

Afterwards, there was regular breathing and his eyes opened themselves like doors. His eyeballs began to roll but his eyelashes did not blink. U.G. appeared like a person who emerged from the tomb with fresh life; he rose from the bottom of the ocean of death.

U.G. got up from the bed and began to walk downstairs as if in stupor, like a zombie.

Valentine was stunned and perplexed with the sudden appearance of U.G before her. It is impossible to describe her feelings at that moment. The sap of her energy bubbled up: 'Oh, thank heavens, he's alive!'

Valentine turned to U.G. and said, 'Douglas is insisting on talking to you. I've been trying to convince him that you are not in a position to come to the phone.' So saying, she passed the receiver to U.G.

U.G. held the phone in his hand and felt as if he was holding an abstract thing. 'Hi Douglas, you can see for yourself what has happened with your own eyes. Come down here at once.'

Douglas hung up the phone and pondered deeply. U.G.'s voice sounded queer, very far away. It was an invitation to see a "dead" man. What might have been happened?

Saanen is three kilometers from Gstaad. At that time there were no local trains to go to Gstaad. Douglas started to walk without losing any time. The sky was like a milky ocean. He walked through the moon-baked valleys of the Saanen Valley.

The cicadas and crickets were clamoring. The acacia bushes were fluffy with ostrich-like plumes. Enjoying the moonlight, Douglas walked briskly, thinking of the present situation.

> Today my mind was like a cat on a hot tin roof. I could not concentrate on anything. Something is trying to communicate in some fashion. Then it suddenly struck me that I should phone to U.G. The desire to ring him up became stronger.
>
> When I phoned him, Valentine answered instead of U.G. She talked with a stuttering voice and sounded very much disturbed. Later, U.G. personally received the phone and said that I should come to him right away. What might have happened to him?

Douglas was walking very fast. The bright moonlight enveloped the entire route and looked like liquid silver. He was washed and soaked completely in that sparkling lily-white ambience.

He reached Chalet Pfynegg. The chalet was perfectly silent. Douglas entered U.G.'s room. He was stunned to see the scene there. Valentine was looking white with terror and U.G. was lying on the couch in a strange posture. His body was in an arched position.[3]

'Oh, boy, what has happened? Why is his body twisted like that?' Douglas approached U.G. and noticed that his body turned blue as if it was in a state of cyanosis. He exclaimed, shrugging his shoulders, 'U.G., what is this posture of yours? Get back to normal.'

U.G. slowly recovered from the odd position and stretched himself on the couch like a baby. After a few moments he breathed heavily, rolled to a side and sat up on the couch with strange movements. Douglas watched closely ~ U.G.'s demeanor appeared strange.

U.G.'s looks were blank, devoid of any feeling; he appeared remote and recluse. Douglas could observe through the window a brilliant full-moon. 'U.G., look at that wonderful full-moon on the peaks of the mountain there, it is beauty at its best. Get up and watch nature's pinnacle.'

U.G. slowly got up, walked gingerly to the window and gazed out with his open eyes for five full minutes.

U.G. eyes were riveted peculiarly to the milky moon and the sea of moonlight, boundless and immense, seeming to grow increasingly in height and depth.

Douglas marveled at U.G.'s strange looks with awed curiosity: U.G.'s penetrating glances appeared as if they dashed out of some unknown realms of immeasurable depth; there was some mystery to his contour.

U.G. seemed to be unaware of the world in and around him. Though Douglas was standing close to him, U.G. became an unknown entity for a moment – he is so near yet so far.

He appeared like a person permanently liberated from the bondage of life and one who broke down some secret gates of human existence.

Douglas looked at the ambience of the room and suspected that something was amiss. The density of the atmosphere was gloomy ... eerie and sepulchral. The air was suffocating and felt like the deathly smell of a graveyard.

'U.G., what has happened here?'

'Douglas, here ... just now literally a physical death has taken place. There is no scope for doubt in what I say. Till now, the mighty and all-powerful ego has laminated my existence and it was not easy to subjugate its fossilized grip. Now it has been obliterated completely,' U. G. concluded on a firm note.

After a pause, U.G. reiterated in a sledge-hammer style, 'Everything else but the body has died and the traces of the ego connected with that. This was the final and ultimate death. Now, there is no enlightenment. There is no one here to be enlightened.'

He uttered emphatically, 'Douglas, there is one thing that I am certain of: the search must come to an end before anything can happen.'

After some time, U.G. added, 'Douglas, your telephone call has made me alive again and brought me back to the world. I don't know what has actually resurrected me. It is beyond the experiencing structure. That's all.'

On hearing U.G., Douglas was overjoyed. His joy knew no bounds. He thought to himself, 'Today is a memorable day in my life.'

Why did Douglas strongly desire to ring up U.G? Was it inevitable at that particular point of time? If Douglas had not phoned, what might have happened?

In the words of the great German literary stalwart Wolf Gang Von Goethe: 'Invariably there would be a mission for every extraordinary person; there is an ordained process for him to execute. Till the mission is fulfilled he will not die even if he is shot at; even if he is dropped from a hill, he will survive; in case he dies, he will be resurrected and he will continue the ordained mission till the end.'

Thus the seven wonderful events in U.G.'s life took place in seven days.[4]

Who is U.G.?

3. The Uppaluri Family

It is common anywhere for a few families to migrate from their native village to another place in search of livelihood. The families who have thus migrated are named after their former village. Thus, in Telugu families, in many cases, the name of the village is prefixed as a surname.

In the saline soils of this part of the state of Andhra Pradesh, an herb known as "*uppi*" is found. After the harvest, this type of whitish grass makes its appearance all over the fields as a weed. Hence this place is called "Uppuluru". Some say that since sea salt ("*uppu*" in Telugu) is found here, the village is known as "Uppuluru" or "Uppaluru".

A few Brahmin families left this place and migrated in different directions in search of their livelihood. A particular family thus settled in Nagayalanka of Avanigadda Taluq[5]. It was the first Uppaluri family at this place. Nagayalanka is situated on the far side of the River Krishna.

As far as people can remember, the name of one of the ancestors of this family is Bindumadhavaiah *alias* Venkatappayya. His father or grandfather might have first settled there. He had a son called Sitaramayya.

Sitaramayya had three brothers whose names are unknown. Ramaseshayya was the son of one of them. He had three marriages; Valluri Gopalam's daughter was his second wife. Pedda Ranganayakamma, Dr. Ranganayakamma, and Chitti Ranganayakamma were their three daughters. The renowned revolutionary Telugu writer, Gudipati Venkatachalam, popularly known as Chalam, married Chitti Ranganayakamma. Their daughter Sowris is well known as a mystic as well as a writer.

The first wife of Sitaramayya had a son by the name of Laxminarayana. Venkatappayya is the name of another son born of his second wife, Ramanamma. He had also a daughter named Durgamma. The details of the life of Laxminarayana are not known, except that he had a son named Radhakrishna Murty.

Venkatappayya married Venkata Lakshminarasamma who hailed from the Davuluri family. Later on in their married life, they had a son, Sitaramayya, named after Venkatappayya's late father.

From ancient times, the lineage of families in India is known by its *gotra*. The *gotras* of Brahmins are named after their ancestral sages. Different families are said to have descended from different sages, known as *rishis*.

According to the ancient Vedic cult adumbrated by the *rishi* lore, the *gotra rishi* of a family is the one who had chalked out the path of spiritual practice for the uplift of that family.

The Uppuluri family descends from the sage Atreya. Thus the members of that family are said to be of the Atreyasa *gotram*. "*Sa*" is a suffix which indicates that the family is of

a particular *gotram*. The Uppalari family is *trai-rushyam*, that is to say, it had three great ancestral sages; they are: Atreya, Archanana, and Shyavashva.

There are a number of sub-sects in the Brahmin caste such as Vaidiki and Niyogi. Vaidiki Brahmins are scholars and their chief occupation is priesthood. They prepare almanacs and they are also astrologers. A Niyogi is a revenue accountant or a document writer in a village. Hence, he is also called a *karanam*. The Kakatiya King Ganapati Deva (1198 -1262 AD) is said to have appointed Brahmins of this sect as *karanams* in six thousand villages. Later on, these Niyogi families have been known as Aaruvela (six-thousand) Niyogis.

Niyogis are well versed in worldly affairs and litigations. With their hereditary sharpness of mind and knowledge, blended with push and tact, they swiftly move with the times. They thus become popular in the villages. But they are said to be egoistic, haughty and proud at heart.

From the times of the Kakatiya dynasty till the modern times, this sect of Brahmins is renowned all over for its scholarship, intelligence, creativity, administrative ability, and efficiency. The ministers Akkanna and Madanna in the court of the Golconda Nawab, Abdul Hasan Qutib Sha (1658-1687 AD), were Niyogi Brahmins. The Prime Minister named Purnayya in the court of Tippu Sultan of the Mysore State was also a famous Niyogi Brahmin.

The Uppaluri family belongs to a respectable lineage of Aaruvela Niyogis. By birth they are intelligent and shrewd. A number of scholars were born in this lineage and earned name for themselves for their attainments in *alankara sastra* (poetics), prosody and grammar in the Sanskrit language. Some of them also had a firm grip on *tarka sastra* (logic). Some of the ancestors were in search of Truth and were engaged in spiritual inquiry. They renounced everything and became ascetics while some occupied key positions in the estates of local landlords. But primarily they were agriculturists.

It is not known whether the Uppaluri family settled in Nagayalanka included *karanams* or not. At the time of Sitaramayya, they owned a hundred acres of land. At the end of his primary education, the eldest son of Sitaramayya expressed his interest in agriculture. His second son Venkatappayya was booming with energy and was eager to achieve great things in life.

After his elementary education in Tenali, Venkatappayya graduated in Machilipatnam and finally obtained his Law degree in Madras. In those days, lawyers commanded a great respect in society. They were treated with greater respect than even doctors.

After their father's demise, Venkatappayya entrusted his lands to his elder brother Laxminarayana and settled in Tenali.

In those times, Tenali and its surrounding areas were well known for their dynamism. A number of scholars, musicians, actors, literati, patrons of arts, social reformers and patriots hailed from there and earned their name and fame. Just as Paris is considered the heart of Europe, Tenali had been reputed as the "Paris of Andhra".

Venkatappayya is of medium height, with a slim and strong body of balanced proportions and a fair complexion. His figure was elegant and had the appearance of noble descent. He was eloquent and dignified and his presence commanding.

The basic nature of Venkatappayya was set apart from others. His life was adventurous and experimental. His individuality could be noticed in every activity. He read many classical works of philosophy in Sanskrit. His intellect was sharpened under the influence of English education. He had strong convictions. To achieve his desired end, Venkatappayya would face every hurdle, loss of money, and stress and strain with an unwavering determination. He never compromised his goals. The strength of his will was unique.

Once the judgment of a lower court was unfavorable to one of his clients; but the client had no money to appeal his case. Venkatappayya was convinced that the judgment was unfair. So he himself financed the appeal to the High Court, commuted for a whole year to Madras and won the case for his client. His colleagues at the bar honored him for this unusual achievement and complimented him for being a fighter for justice and a harbinger of truth.

Venkatappayya's knowledge of law was impeccable. Before taking up a case he used to try it himself. Unless he was convinced that the case could be sustained by the statutes of law, he would not take it up. The talk of the town was that if justice was to be sought, it could only be achieved through his help.

Sometimes, in order to avoid the trouble of hovering around the courts, Venkatappayya would summon the parties and settle the dispute amicably outside the court. He was settling family disputes also similarly and nobody ever dared to criticize his solutions.

As a lawyer Venkatappayya earned a lot of money. In Morispet, in Tenali, he built a three-storied mansion; in those days it was unparalleled. Its compound was huge and spread over a wide area. The street has been known as Uppaluri Street thereafter.

The house of Venkatappayya resembled that of a *zamindar* or landlord. The dining hall was always busy with invitees as well as the uninvited; royal food was served to one and all. The house was full with men and material.

Venkatappayya was adamant and unyielding in temperament. He would act as he thought proper and never cared for other's advice, however good it might have sounded. He bowed to no one in his whole life. People feared him as much as they respected him. His words were few and always meaningful.

Venkatappayya was generous and kind at heart; he provided food and shelter to a number of poor students. He awarded annual scholarships to deserving bright students. Whenever a destitute approached him for help, he always extended a helping hand. His honesty was well known and his word was honored by court officials as well as others. Venkatappayya helped very many to gain employment and livelihood. He was gratefully called "*Annadata*" or a free giver of food.

Venkatappayya liked to undertake tasks which had not so far been ventured by anyone before. The field of agriculture attracted his attention and he wanted to make some new experiments. He purchased barren lands cheaply and cultivated them with fertilizers and manure. Fortunately for him, there were bumper yields.

Venkatappayya succeeded in growing vegetables such as tomatoes, cauliflowers, arrow root, beat root, cabbage and nulcole[6] (which foreigners relished very much). He purchased a hundred acres of land near the seashore and the cultivation had doubled. Once, unfortunately, when the crops were just ready, a cyclone swept them all away. This occurred for four or five seasons in succession and the loss was so heavy that his other resources had to be tapped.

Venkatappayya was fully aware of the situation, but he did not change his mind. He remembered the great king Vikramarka admired for his unparalleled determination and perseverance. That year the yields were doubled but the market prices were discouraging. The net income was barely an eighth of the investment. Venkatappayya bravely faced the situation; but his elder brother Laxminarayana broke down.

In those days, bone ash was used in the process of bleaching sugar. Such sugar factories were scarce, just one or two in the entire state. Venkatappayya planned to start a factory on his own and make good all his agricultural loss. Laxminarayana opposed the proposal. His wife Lakshminarasamma vehemently protested against it. At her request, all the near and dear tried to persuade him to drop the idea, saying that it was against Brahminism to do business involving bones and that the family prestige would be tarnished.

Venkatappayya paid a deaf ear to all of them. He would sail alone, come what might. As per his orders, the necessary machinery and equipment was ordered from England. A factory was built near the Tenali railway station. Not a single Brahmin family attended the inaugural function.

Laxminarayana was bedridden for some time and finally passed away. His son, Radhakrishna Murty, detached himself from the joint family.

Venkatappayya's fortunes began to dwindle gradually. He had been a crownless king until then. His lifestyle also showed a marked change.

Venkatappayya brought up his only son Sitaramayya with the utmost care. The boy was intelligent and had a good physique too, with a fair complexion like his father's. Sitaramayya's lifestyle, however, was different from his father's. He was not worldly-wise. He was gentle and soft. Unlike his father, he was flexible. Though born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he was not proud, showy or boastful. He was sociable and moved with everyone in a friendly manner. He was a person of few words, with a strong zeal to learn. With his sharp intellect he mastered classical literature. But he did not want to continue his school education after passing his F.A. (Fellow of Arts). To those who observed him, he appeared thoughtful and contemplative. Few could read his mind; Sitaramayya's demeanor was deep and sober.

Venkatappayya, desirous of getting his son married, started to look into offers brought to him by matchmakers from different places. In fact, a number of good proposals were crowding in, but none was suitable. An alliance with the Uppaluri family was not easy. A proposal would be considered suitable only if the bride's side could match them in respect of status, wealth, ancestral glory, and, above all, prestige. It is customary in Brahmin families to verify whether the ancestry is spotless on either side of the parents of the bride or the bridegroom for seven generations. If everything is satisfactory, the horoscopes of the couple should still be compatible with each other; if not, the offer is declined with little hesitation.

Matchmakers had been very active, but in vain. At last, a proposal from Guntur was accepted. The bride's father was a lawyer. His family was well-to-do and respectable. The proposal was discussed at length in the presence of mediators. A tentative agreement was reached regarding the date and time of marriage. The date of the wedding was fast approaching. Suddenly Venkatappayya came to know that the bride's father talked ill of him to someone. Also, there were some departures from the agreed formalities.

That was all. Venkatappayya flared up in anger. He sent message to the bride's father annulling the previous agreement. The bride's father realized his mistake and begged him in person to forgive him. He assured him that he would abide by the promises he had previously made unconditionally. But Venkatappayya was adamant. 'I don't want to dupe myself by having an alliance with uncultured liars,' he roared.

Another proposal from Machilipatnam was presented to him. The counterparts were also distantly related. They were rich enough and the bride was their only child. The match was considered suitable in every respect. They thought of fixing the engagement date. Unexpectedly, the grandmother of the bride had passed away. The bride's father requested for a postponement of the marriage for six months. For some unknown reason, Venkatappayya replied, 'We can't sit and wait all that time. If we decide on no other proposal, then we will consider yours. But don't wait for our consent.'

Narasamma, mother of Sitaramayya, began to feel pessimistic about her son's marriage. Relatives advised Venkatappayya to accept some proposal or the other, ignoring minor issues. But he declared, 'Unless I am satisfied in every respect, I will not accept any proposal. There is no question of compromise. The country is not barren. Events are governed by destiny. None can stop it.'

One day, at about 11 o'clock a.m., Venkatappayya was talking with someone in his room. It was a hot day. A matchmaker rushed in sweating and gasping for breath. He bowed to Venkatappayya respectfully and said, 'Most respected sir! Let me submit that this is not mere gossip. The bride hails from the Tummalapalli family. Her father is Gopala Krishna Murty Pantulu, a most revered Sanskrit scholar, a *ghanapathi*. He is a renowned lawyer, like you. I submit that their ancestry is spotless. They equal you in respect of wealth, status and nobility. Pantulu has three daughters and no sons. However, he adopted a boy of the same *gotra*. The eldest daughter was given in marriage to a boy of the Yellamraju family. But unfortunately, she died while delivering a child. The second daughter is the daughter-in-law of the erstwhile *diwan* who hails from the

Valluri family. The youngest and last daughter is an embodiment of beauty and all the virtues. She is well-read and of good conduct. Perhaps by nature, she knows how to respect the elders and organize her home well. Her parents will not hesitate to give dowry as you deem fit. In my opinion, it is the most suitable match. One more piece of information: Gopala Krishna Murty seems to be associated with some Society in Madras. He is also acquainted with some British people there. It seems that a European lady founded the Society.'

'Yes. It's the Theosophical Society. Annie Besant founded it. She has utmost regard for the Vedic religion; I have seen her sometime ago in Rajahmundry,' Venkatappayya clarified.

The matchmaker then proceeded to Gudiwada and introduced himself to Tummalapalli Gopala Krishna Murty Pantulu. He added, 'It is my great fortune to meet you, sir, in this context. The bridegroom hails from the Uppaluri family. Like you, his father also is an eminent lawyer. I also learned that you know each other in some fashion. He is the landlord residing in that glorious three-storied mansion. The bridegroom is their only son and heir apparent for their entire property. The youth is handsome and well-behaved. He has great regard for the elders, like everyone else in the family.'

Pantulu replied, 'I heard of Venkatappayya sometime ago. I had seen him a number of times in the premises of the Madras High Court. But what about dowry and other formalities? Are his expectations too high?' The matchmaker reassured him, 'No, no, sir. He is not greedy. He wants a daughter-in-law from a respectable family.'

After her husband visited the bride at her place, Durgamma was all praise for the bride. She exclaimed to her sister-in-law, 'What a beauty, she appears as if she is made of gold. She flashed like a golden lightning. She looks like the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi. She is most suitable for our Sitaramayya. The bride is well-behaved and virtuous. Her melodious song on Lord Krishna is echoing in my ears even now.'

Later, Venkatappayya and Gopala Krishna Murty Pantulu personally discussed the details of the marriage. Each of them developed a high regard for the other.

As a matter of history, the Uppaluri family had previously considered a number of other proposals. For some reason or other, six of them were turned down at the final stage. The current seventh one was finally accepted and confirmed.

Just before the wedding, someone informed Gopala Krishna Murty Pantulu that the property of Venkatappayya was in a volatile stage and that he was neck-deep in debts. Pantulu coolly replied, 'Well, what's in my hands? We should act as directed by the Divine Director. We are simply His instruments. But it will be a disgrace to break a promise.'

4. The Saga of Tummalapalli Gopala Krishna Murty *alias* Pantulu

The plant acacia Arabic is called "*Tumma*" in Telugu. This tree grows everywhere, whether there is water or not. It is full of thorns. If a thorn is stuck in the body, it causes severe pain. The village Tummalapalli is named so because of the innumerable *tumma* trees there. It is in the Krishna District. A number of Brahmin families had domiciled from Tummalapalli to Bezawada to earn their livelihood. Tummalapalli Gopala Krishna Murty belonged to one such family. His ancestors worked as teachers in Chitty Guduru Sanskrit School. It is said that some of them started residential Sanskrit schools.

The sons as well as daughters in these families were Sanskrit scholars and some were also Sanskrit poets. It was probably for this reason the saying 'Even when the Tummalapallis sneeze they sound like Sanskrit,' came into vogue. The details of the life of Tummalapalli Gopala Krishna Murty are not clearly known. It seems that he was born around 1865. He had a brother named Balaramaiah. Gopala Krishna Murty thought of studying for some professional course to advance in his life; so from his childhood he progressed by hard work. It is said that he studied in a Christian institution in Machilipatnam and later passed his F.A. (Fellow of Arts) there. Chances of earning a lot of money in the legal profession were high. So Gopala Krishna Murty proceeded to Madras and joined the Law College. He stayed in a small rented room in the Triplicane area and cooked his own food. He tutored children in his leisure time to earn additional income.

Like the other members of the Tummalapalli family, he studied spiritual books and engaged himself in spiritual inquiry.

While searching for guidance to achieve his life's objective, he came under the influence of the Theosophical Society. He came into contact with Tallapragada Subba Rao who was also residing in Triplicane at that time. Subba Rao came from Kakinada. Under his influence, Gopala Krishna Murty's life turned a new leaf.

Subba Rao was a close associate of Madam Blavatsky who was one of the founders of the Theosophical Society. He was well versed in Hindu esoteric knowledge. Both Murty and Rao used to visit the Society Center in Adyar together. Murty came into contact with Blavatsky and Colonel Alcott at the Society.

During the second half of the year 1890, a leader of the Theosophical Movement, Annie Besant, visited Bezawada, while touring India. She spoke eloquently about the spiritual lore of Hinduism.

Gopala Krishna Murty met her and donated a little money from his savings. Later on, he took part in the activities of the Society. His life began to change. He completed his law degree and started his practice in a small room in Bezawada. He was regarded as an intelligent lawyer and was elected Secretary of the Law Association.

It is not known who his first wife was. She passed away without any offspring. His second marriage was fixed with the daughter of Challamraju Satyanarayana named Annapurnamma. But as fate would have it, the bride died two days before the wedding.

After some time, his present father-in-law surprised everyone by offering his second daughter Durgamma to him in marriage. He first rejected the offer for some reason. After a great deal of persuasion he relented. Thus he started his family life afresh.

Durgamma was twelve years old when she was married. She was strikingly beautiful with well-chiseled features and a lively countenance of a pair of glittering eyes; her voice was rich and deep. She was of short stature but balanced proportions. She had deeply-embedded religious roots and was the embodiment of an ideal wife.

As timely rain yields bumper crops, the marriage with Durgamma fetched prosperity to Gopala Krishna Murty. He had a house built in Bezawada. He earned fabulous sums of money as a popular lawyer. He purchased a number of tracts of land in Bezawada as well as in the Gudiwada area. He had no sons but had two daughters, Rukmini and Saraswati. He and his wife adopted his nephew, his brother Balaramaiah's son, Jagannadham.

After acquiring land in the Gudiwada area, Gopala Krishna Murty desired to move from Bezawada to Gudiwada. In 1903, on the road from Gudiwada to Bantumilly, he bought an old tiled house with a lot of space around it. He started to have a mansion built for his family.

Meanwhile, learning that Colonel Alcott came to Machilipatnam by a steamer from Madras and was staying with Vemuri Subba Rao, Gopala Krishna Murty rushed to Machilipatnam to meet him. Reminding him of his donation to the Theosophical Society, he invited Colonel Alcott to Gudiwada. Accordingly, Colonel Alcott was his guest for a day. Murty promised Colonel Alcott that he would provide a good housing for the Theosophical Society in Gudiwada at his own expense and that he would work for the Society.

Murty's mansion was completed in a short period of time. He attended to all his court affairs and transactions in an office he had set up in his house. He had a clerk to attend to his work.

Around the mansion there was a large retaining wall. There was a reception room on the right side of the main door of the house. In that room, a number of cupboards held law books as well as literature on the Theosophical Society. A number of spiritual books were also kept on the shelves. In between the cupboards, issues of the *Hindu* daily lay stacked in an orderly manner.

In the interior of the house, there was a dining hall and a kitchen adjacent to it. The bedroom was to the left of the hall. The prayer room was attached to it; there was also a cellar, with a large iron safe in it.

Near the kitchen there was a well full with water. In the yard, there was a big *Tulasi* (sacred basil) shrine; turmeric and vermilion decorated it in a majestic way. In the yard around the retaining wall, a number of trees such as pomegranate, almond and mango were planted. For purposes of worship, plants like Red China rose, jasmine and perennial red jasmine were also planted. A little distance away from the main building there was an outhouse with some rooms and a verandah. Children were fed in the outhouse. In the afternoons, sitting on crude native cots, womenfolk gossiped and had afternoon siestas. At the far end of the house, there were latrines. A number of additional rooms were built to provide accommodations for cooks, servants and other dependents.

For occasional visits from distant relatives there was a separate hall. To climb to the second floor there was a wooden staircase made of Rangoon teak on the right side of the house.

On the second floor, in the front of the house there was a balcony. Its floor was laid with diamond-shaped boards of wood; on the left of it, Murty had a special prayer room built. It was always under lock and key. No one else was allowed to enter it. In the back, he had his bedroom. There was a closet in it, besides a writing table and four or five teak chairs. The rest of the upstairs was a living room. The hall was used for philosophical discussions and reading. In the hall a small special room made of straw was specially built for visiting ascetics.

Though Murty did not directly participate in the Independence Struggle, he was supporting it in his own way. He had direct contacts with top leaders in the State. He donated liberally for the movement.

During those days, Vijnana Chandrika Mandali was popular. Komarraju Laxmana Rao was its chief editor. The Mandali was publishing historical novels, biographies and other books of a hundred pages each and selling them for a quarter of a rupee per copy. To add to it, Murty founded the Saraswati Niketanam to publish a number of philosophical books. *Purnayoga* and *Dharma* of Sir Aurobindo, the saint of Pondicherry, were translated into Telugu and published by this publishing house. Translations of *Bharata Silpa*, written by the great Avanindra Tagore and *Upanyasa Manjari* of the Nobel laureate, Ravindranath Tagore, were also among its important publications. The great classical philosophical book, *Maha Jnana Vasistha*, was published by Saraswati Niketanam for the benefit of philosophical readers.

Gopala Krishna Murty went to Machilipatnam in 1914 to meet Annie Besant when she came there in connection with the anniversary celebrations of Noble College. After the meeting, when somebody was about to introduce him to her she said, 'He is not a stranger to us; the Society knows him very well. He does not need not to be introduced.'

It is a strange irony that Murty, who was himself a rich landlord, was lending money at government-approved rates to help poor farmers. A small incident is said to have triggered his action. Pantulu knew a poor farmer named Ramayya who had owned two acres of land. Ramayya borrowed five hundred rupees from a local moneylender for his

daughter's marriage. But he could not pay it back even after several years. The moneylender seized his land, house and other valuable things, reducing Ramayya to penury. Murty had probably already heard of several such cases as a lawyer. He consoled Ramayya and extended his helping hand by leasing his own land to him so that he could start his life afresh.

On humanitarian grounds and with a deep sense of social awareness he decided to start a co-operative Bank in Gudiwada, the first of its kind in Andhra.

One day, he assembled all small-holding farmers in town and explained at length the benefits and advantages of a co-operative society in helping them become free from huge debt-traps set by cruel moneylenders. The uneducated and innocent farmers listened to him attentively and pledged their total support. Their response was electrifying as many people placed great faith in him and contributed 2,623 rupees as seed capital. Thus the Gudiwada Co-operative Bank came into being on 9th July 1915. Gopala Krishna Murty was the first Founder Chairman of the Bank and served in that capacity till 1918.

Murty was taking an active part in the political and social movements of his day with zeal and patriotism.

His friends and close associates used to call him affectionately as "Tummalapalli Pantulu" or simply as "Pantulu Garu".

In spite of his many avocations, Pantulu had a great attraction for the Theosophical Society, for its objectives as well as its teachings. He did not merely like them; he had a yearning for them. He completely identified himself with them. He had one and only lifetime objective, that is, to become a perfect Theosophist. He wanted to rise to spiritual heights and make his life meaningful. He aspired to attain salvation by following the Theosophical path.

Pantulu respected tradition and the Vedic religion on the hand, and on the other, tried to attain his goal of salvation with the support of the Theosophical Society. It appeared like he was riding two horses at the same time. This seems to have led to conflicts within him.

Pantulu proceeded to work to fulfill the promise he had made to Colonel Alcott and the Theosophical Society. Without begging or borrowing he wanted to provide a building from his own funds to the Society. His will was strong and the work was completed in 1916. In the central area of Gudiwada a big building was made ready for the Theosophical Society.

On the second floor of it, a separate hall was allotted to the Esoteric Section, a very important branch of the Theosophical Society. A hall was provided on the first floor for discussions and meetings.

Thus an inseparable bond was formed between him and the Society and it was drawing all the members of his family toward it. And a foundation was laid for an important

event in the future.

Tummalapalli Pantulu was not hefty in appearance, but his personality was commanding. He had a golden complexion with etched features. Though he was of medium stature, his white *dhoti* and turban added to his dignity. He always wore the turban whenever he went out. His look indicated a strong desire for knowledge and his nose, a strong will; his broad chest reflected his noble heart. His looks were sharp. He was a man of few words. His facial expression made him look like a man of reserve.

He was veritably perfection personified, a person endowed with an inflamed sense of discipline. He opined, 'Discipline forms the character of a man and determines his success in life.' He was highly punctual in his routine like the German philosopher Immanuel Kant – at 6.30 am daily worship and prayers, breakfast at 8.30 am, lunch at 12.30 pm and going to bed at 9.30 pm. Early in the morning, he woke up at 4:00 am to read books and letters. He made his schedule a routine for everyone in the house.

The wisdom of Pantulu was not apparent on the surface. He could easily please the British judges with his fluency in English. He would stretch legal points to his own advantage, but he was never unscrupulous. He never tried to win cases on the basis of false evidence.

Pantulu never accepted advice from anyone, but would not hesitate to give it freely to others. By nature he acted as he liked and as he believed.

His external appearance and internal personality sometimes seemed to differ from each another. He was generally miserly but sometimes generous. He appeared fork-tongued to his friends; and they could not understand why he was so tight-fisted. He would say, 'Yes, by hard work I took care of every penny of my income. I know the value of money and how to respect it. If we do not respect our hard-earned money, will it stay with us? Managing money is as difficult as earning it.'

Although he lent money to needy people as a kind of social service and charged them only lawful interest, at the time of repayment he was strict regarding the calculation of interest as well as the principal. Only after the amount was fully paid would he lend money again to the borrower.

In those days it was common to provide food and other amenities to poor boys. Pantulu remembered the hardship of his own childhood days. He provided food for one day of each week to poor boys, and he would see that his friends also had joined him in his effort.

He would not tolerate disrespect. Once, perhaps due to absent-mindedness, a weekly-boarder boy ignored him in the market place. Next time when the boy came as usual to his house for food, he angrily shouted at him, 'Have you already become blind with arrogance? You are unable even to recognize elders, let alone respect them?'

Pantulu was not easily approachable to friends or relatives, whoever they might be. They were kept at a distance.

The eldest daughter of Pantulu, Rukmini, was married to Yellamraju Harinarayana who was from rich family. She died in Visakhapatnam at the time of the birth of her son, Gopalam. Vemuri Chinnayya Rao, son of Vemuri Subba Rao of Machilipatnam, married his second daughter, Saraswati. Both son and father were lawyers. Chinnayya Rao had a son, Narasimha Rao and two daughters, Rajyalakshmi and Subhadra.

5. U.G.'s Mother Bharati

Gopala Krishna Murty's third daughter Bharati was born in 1902. Soon after her birth, his fortunes had changed: he became successful in every area. He sentimentally believed that her birth was the cause of all his prosperity. He believed his daughter to be *Aiswarya Lakshmi* (the Goddess of fabulous wealth).

He gave his daughter a great deal of attention. He did not want her to be hurt ever so slightly while she played outdoors. In fact, she was not allowed to go out. Her playmates were invited to his house. Her every wish was instantly satisfied. If Murty happened to be angry at any time, a simple hello from his daughter would calm him down.

Once, while playing at home, Bharati tore an important court document. If it had been someone else, Murty would have torn that person into pieces. But he did not utter a single word of rebuke. If he was going out on any important mission, he would ask Bharati to walk toward him for good luck.

In those days, girls of high families rarely went to school for education. Enough was learned at home to be able to read and write letters. The family had made the important decision to educate Bharati in a school.

Bharati was a smart student. She could recite anything from memory just by one reading and she was at the top of her class. She could recite tongue-twisting Sanskrit verses with ease. She participated in elocution and other contests and won a number of prizes. Her eloquence was wonderful and it was hard to argue with her. She was a lawyer's daughter indeed.

She had dazzling beauty. Her round face and well-shaped head were commanding. Long black hair added to her natural beauty. Her sparkling eyes were sharp. She was somewhat short in height.

While she moved about in the house, people felt as if goddess Lakshmi was moving about. She represented an ideal traditional Brahmin woman.

It appears that she had been devotional ever since she was a child. Everyday, as a rule, she read part of the sacred book Bhagavatam. She very much liked Mirabai and her devotional songs. In her heart and soul, Bharati was a devotee of Lord Sri Krishna. Every cell in her body was filled with him. She took a vow not to sip even a drop of water till she had completed her prayers to the Lord. At times, while praying to God she went into a trance – Bharati was such an ardent devotee. She had her photograph taken standing by the side of a statue of Lord Krishna playing his flute, and the photograph was preserved carefully.

Bharati constantly recited the sacred A*shtakshari Mantra* or the eight-lettered phrase, *Om Namo Narayanaya* in her mind, and the casual phrase she would often utter was 'Krishna, Krishna'. For her, the entire universe is filled with Krishna. Everything was an offering to Krishna. No one owned anything in the world.

Besides, Bharati worshipped every morning, going around the divine *tulasi* plant three times.

Bharati was kindly to all the living beings around her. For instance, she used to provide a little food to the stray street dog twice daily. Outside the house, near the cracks of walls, ants used to appear and Bharati fed them with a little broken rice. She would spread bunches of paddy for all the sparrows which fluttered around her. Once, a sparrow laid eggs in a small hole in a wall. Unfortunately, the eggs dropped on the floor and some of them were broken. Bharati picked the unbroken eggs and put them back carefully inside the hole.

Bharati sometimes took initiative and made decisions without first obtaining permission of the elders. No one, however, questioned her decisions, since they were flawless.

In Gudiwada, Bharati made her presence felt everywhere in the household. She was helpful to her father as well as to her mother in their work, including in the daily worship arrangements. Her mother Durgamma was immensely happy with the manner in which she was looking after everything in the house, as though she was a real guardian of the house.

Bharati was soft at heart; she was calm, gentle, and tolerant. She dealt with everyone with a personal touch. Even if a situation warranted it, her anger was controlled and she did not blurt it out. She was straightforward and broadminded. Her self-respect was unyielding.

She was driven by great compassion for the poor and the needy. Her heart melted when she observed anyone in distress. Once, during the Sankranti holidays, she gave away a silk sari to a beggar who went around with a bull which would perform tricks at his behest. The sari was rather expensive. Noticing it, her mother remarked 'Oh, My God! There is a heap of old saris in the house. Would anyone give a silk sari as alms?' Bharati replied, 'Should anyone hesitate at the time of almsgiving? At that moment, I felt like giving it and I did. That's all. Others give only old saris to him. Unfortunately no one gives him a strong and good sari. All right, I gave it away. Is our property reduced in any fashion by my alms?'

On another festival day, a feast was held. The first batch of guests finished eating. A number of guests were yet to come. It was getting late. Bharati noticed that the servant-maid was tired and hungry. She immediately provided her with a leaf-platter full of food, with all the items of the feast on it. Her mother noticed it and wondered at her service, 'Is it not the usual practice to feed the servants after all others have finished their meal? What's the rush to give food to the servant-maid, so sumptuously at that?' There was a streak of anger in her words. Bharati replied 'Oh, my God Krishna, the poor girl has been toiling since dawn doing heavy work. She is dead-tired and ravenous. My heart melted and I fed her. Is it a sin to do that?'

Bharati was still a young girl when she started looking after her sister's children, Minakshi and the infant, Gopalam. She literally transformed herself and played the

role of a mother. Bathing the children, dressing them, feeding them and singing lullabies to them had become part of her daily routine. She took care of them patiently and affectionately.

Her voice was musical. She used to sing verses from the Bhagavatam. There is a lullaby on the life of Lord Krishna, which she liked most. It runs very smoothly, commencing with the phrase, "*Kasturi Ranga Ranga*". She would become totally absorbed in it while singing it.

* * *

Sitaramayya and Bharati were married in Gudiwada in August 1915. Soon after she started living with her husband and the in-laws, Venkatappayya ran into a piece of good fortune. A judgment was made in his favor in a longstanding case in the High Court. He was jubilant and linked his legal success with the auspicious arrival of his daughter-in-law.

Lakshminarasamma was taking the utmost care of her most beautiful daughter-in-law. She would not allow her to feel even the slightest strain. But, in course of time, her attention for her daughter-in-law gradually waned for some unknown reason; perhaps because she began to feel jealous of her. Then started her nagging and bickering. Bharati could not understand her mother-in-law's change of heart. She was made the daily target of unpleasant comments, sharp strictures and insults, all of which hurt her feelings.

Bharati, on her part, continued to show respect for her mother-in-law. She endured all – it was a part of her cultural heritage. She considered the whole of her silent agony as a legacy of her previous births and stoically resigned herself to her fate. She totally submitted all the insults and tortures she had received to her favorite deity, Krishna.

Sitaramayya noticed the agony of his wife, but did not venture to utter a single word to his mother in protest. His mother had been everything for him. He had respect for her and he was afraid of her. He was rather timid. However, when he and his wife were alone, he would pacify his wife and console her affectionately.

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The glory of Venkatappayya started to decline. He was facing losses in every area. There were no returns from his fields. The crops failed. And when the fields were about to yield a good harvest, there were sweeping cyclones. Debts owed to him were not paid back. His borrowers avoided him.

He borrowed large sums of money. He sold off some of his land to repay his debts. The time was adverse. All the erstwhile weaklings who had depended on his mercy earlier turned indifferent. The factory he owned was closed and sealed. His tractor was sold off. His horse died and subsequently he gave away his carriage to a charity. Before, there had always been a continuous flow of clients. But now, he was no longer in demand in the court.

At that time, an old friend of Venkatappayya from Sangam Jagarlamudi village recommended an unusual case to him. He believed that if Venkatappayya took it up, he would surely win it. He came to know that there were a couple of promissory notes lying idle in Venkatappayya's safe keep. The litigation was about a property dispute among brothers. In short, a part of the litigation should be managed "indirectly"; the rest of it would be through the creation of forged documents with the help of those old promissory notes. The remuneration would be about thirty thousand rupees. Venkatappayya appeared to listen to the entire proposal. Suddenly he turned wild and shouted, 'Had it been someone else, I would have instantaneously thrown him out. Since I have known you for a long time, I am sparing you. How dare you think that I would stoop down in my poverty to such levels?' The person was shocked at Venkatappayya's reaction and rushed out.

Venkatappayya was facing difficulties from every direction. But he did not lose his serenity. His self-confidence continued to be firm. Like a Stoic, he faced the upheavals with a steady mind and composure.

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Bharati arrived at her parents' house ten days before the New Year's Day. Her mother Durgamma had already learned about the dwindling of Venkatappayya's properties and about the news that he was plunged in debts. She was also aware of the tortures and agony of Bharati at her in-laws' house. Bharati looked like a golden angel when she had left for the in-laws' place. But now, she appeared before her mother with sunken face and eyes, hanging cheeks and a slim weakened body. Indeed, her appearance was heart-rending.

But Bharati did not utter even a single word against her mother-in-law in criticism. The searching questions of Durgamma failed to elicit any information from her. Instead, Bharati thought within herself, 'Lord Krishna is omnipresent. Everything takes place as per his will; He is the creator. It is not known why He has been testing me like this. It is my duty to weather through this critical period,' and was unperturbed at heart.

Sitaramayya arrived the day before the holiday. Bharati felt happy at his arrival. On seeing him Durgamma frowned at him silently and kept indifferent. The father-in-law, Pantulu, said hello to him, enquired about his welfare casually and went out.

Durgamma gave vent to her anguish and passed caustic remarks in his presence indirectly against Bharati's mother-in-law and against the financial status of her son-in-law.

Bharati was taken aback when her mother let loose her sharp tongue like that. She felt ashamed and sank into her shoes. A guest, that too no less than the son-in-law, was treated indecently and discourteously. Bharati became indignant.

She rushed to her mother and shouted at her. She said, 'Remember this. I am now the daughter-in-law of the Uppaluri family first and only then your daughter.'

Durgamma was aghast at the whole incident. Bharati approached her husband and begged his forgiveness for the rudeness of her mother. Sitaramayya, who knew her mind so very well, replied softly, 'I know your feelings and I don't take her words seriously.'

Next day, it was the New Year's Day. Durgamma tried to present new clothes to her daughter and son-in-law in a silver plate. Bharati declined the gift. Durgamma begged her daughter in vain to accept them. Pantulu's appeal too fell flat before Bharati. Finally, Durgamma approached her son-in-law and begged his forgiveness. But Bharati was firm.

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Lakshminarasamma, Bharati's mother-in-law, was totally upset by the financial strain. Her mental stress led to high blood pressure and eventually to paralysis. She was bedridden.

Bharati attended to her every need as if she was an infant. Lakshminarasamma was stunned at her nobility and service. She felt ashamed of her past behavior. She was in tears of repentance. Her head bent, and looking down, with a hesitant voice she pleaded for mercy and forgiveness. Bharati was embarrassed. She forgave her and comforted her.

After a few days, Lakshminarasamma lost her speech. Her soul started its departure from the body. One day, at midnight, while Bharati was trying to help her sip a spoonful of the sacred *tulasi* water, Lakshminarasamma passed away in her lap.

Along with his wealth, Venkatappayya's life-long partner had passed away and the painful separation made him shed tears, for the first time.

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In October 1917, Bharati became pregnant. One day, an old widow walked in, supporting herself with her walking stick. She addressed Venkatappayya in a familiar tone of voice: 'Venkatappayya, I learned that my "granddaughter" is pregnant. I came over to see her. Everyone appreciates her unparalleled service to her mother-in-law. Such an exemplary woman would definitely be blessed with a worthy son. Who knows, he may totally change the fortunes of the family.'

While leaving the house, she noticed Venkatappayya's melancholic mood and commented, 'My dear fellow, you are gloomy like a fool. Neither the body nor wealth lasts long. Your progeny will definitely flourish in the future. Your grandson will restore the prestige and dignity of your family and even elevate it to a peak level.'

Bharati believed that the growing embryo within her was a boon from the Lord; that the child would be born with a trace of her favorite deity Lord Krishna or his divine a*msa*[7]; and that all her austerities and prayers would yield a divine fruit. She also believed that her son would earn universal name and fame and thus help generations on both sides of his family attain salvation.

Ever since she came to know about her daughter's pregnancy, Durgamma began to anticipate that her grandson would be extraordinary in every respect.

Bharati always had a separate room for herself in her parents' house. When she was still a child, she gathered peacock feathers, bead garlands, Kondapalli toys and other things to play with. In the cupboard she carefully preserved storybooks of ideal and pious housewives as well as Puranic books. Sri Krishna is commonly shown in pictures wearing a peacock feather in his hair. For very many years a portrait of Krishna playing his flute had been hanging on the wall. Now the portrait of mother Yasoda feeding the child Sri Krishna in her lap had a place on it.

Bharati spent more and more of her time in prayer. She was meditating hours on end and becoming oblivious to her surroundings. Her mind turned inward; she resembled Mirabai[8] who was totally absorbed in her devotion to Krishna.

Throughout the day, Bharati kept herself busy with meditation, uttering the sacred name of Lord Krishna silently. Whenever she slept, she slept for long hours, as if she was in the grip of some supernatural power. She felt happier to lose herself in such deep sleep.

Durgamma was worried, as it was hard to wake her up. When she woke up, Bharati would look at every one, expressing her annoyance silently at being disturbed, as though she was forcibly brought down from a heavenly plane.

One day, Bharati did not get out at all from her room. Being terrified, Durgamma pushed open the door and was taken aback to see her daughter in an unconscious state, leaning sideways in a *padmasana*[9] posture. Two people lifted her and gently placed her on the bed. It was thought that she had fainted because she was weak. Bharati became conscious after a while. When she was asked as to what had happened, she explained that she was perhaps visiting some unknown heavenly planes. 'I was extremely happy then,' she added.

At the time of prayer, Bharati felt some overflowing dynamism within herself with a divine touch, the touch which she believed would take charge of her life.

In Hindu families, when a woman's pregnancy runs into the sixth month, it is customary to celebrate it with a function called *seemantam*. Durgamma arranged for such a celebration in a grand fashion.

On his way to Machilipatnam, where he was going on some business, Sitaramayya stopped by in Gudiwada to see his wife. His mother-in-law received him cordially this time.

Sitaramayya met his wife after a period of three months. The couple was happy to see each other. They discussed their financial situation and Bharati advised her husband to seek some employment and regain his independence. 'Bharati, I have applied to the Andhra Insurance Company for a job and am on my way to Machilipatnam for an

interview. I will probably get some help from our relatives in getting a job there,' he replied.

Bharati felt very happy and said, 'Believe me; you *will* get the job with God's grace. My intuition tells me so,' she reassured him.

In the evening, as she was saying goodbye to her husband, Bharati gave him some money which she had been carefully saving, saying, 'Keep this money for your expenses.' Sitaramayya was reluctant to take it. But she insisted and pressed the money into his pocket.

Bharati looked at her husband steadily for a while; suddenly she felt a wave of fear, just for a moment. Again her looks followed him to the end of the street; he was on his way to Machilipatnam.

* * *

6. Pangs of Delivery and Death

All through her life, Bharati had a charitable disposition. If anyone expressed a liking for anything in her possession, she would give it away without hesitation. She had no special attachment for anything. Whenever anyone came to her door looking for alms, he or she never left empty-handed. She always kept a basket full of rice and some coins in a small tin can ready for this purpose.

One evening, an ascetic in saffron clothes approached her and begged for alms. At that time, Bharati was in the prayer room. On hearing him, breathing heavily but walking steadily she carried a small basket filled with rice and a few coins, to the gate. The person at the gate with his matted hair looked like Lord Siva. She bowed to him and dropped the alms in his pouch. She was also about to drop some coins, hoping to receive his blessings. The ascetic glanced at her and closed his eyes for a moment. Then he declared, calmly looking at her, 'My child, my pouch is full now. I don't need to go anywhere else looking for alms. Shortly, your pouch too will be full and your prayers will yield the fruit you desire. You will have an excellent son and you will attain salvation.' Normally such ascetics blessed housewives for a long married life, longevity and progeny. But this ascetic's blessing was different.

As the pregnancy advanced further, Bharati's body became heavy from retaining water. She gasped for breath whenever she tried to walk, as if she was not carrying the load of a normal child. The child inside was felt too heavy. On her golden skin black streaks appeared. It was believed that such a color indicated a male child.

As soon as Bharati went to sleep, she had dreams. When she woke up, she felt as though her dream was reality and the world around was an illusion. Such experiences were perhaps due to her mental agitation and devotional ecstasy.

Delivery time was fast approaching. The elder daughter of Durgamma died after giving birth to Gopalam in Visakhapatnam. Durgamma was therefore extra-cautious and the delivery was arranged to take place in Gudiwada. The other sister of Bharati, Saraswati, wife of Vemuri Chinnayya Rao, offered her house in Machilipatnam for delivery. Bharati agreed to go there. Saraswati hired a midwife to help with the delivery. In her house, a room was cleaned perfectly and kept ready exclusively for this purpose.

Bharati arrived in Machilipatnam along with Durgamma and a few servants. In the room allotted for delivery, a portrait of Lord Krishna playing the flute was mounted on the wall. The prayer room was adjacent to the delivery room. Bharati lay on the bed and incessantly repeated the sacred name of Lord Krishna while looking at the portrait.

According to calculations and predictions, Bharati should deliver between 30th June and 2nd July. But there were no signs of labor yet; Durgamma began to doubt the prediction. Bharati was not physically strong by nature. She looked anemic. But her eyes were bright and twinkling. She believed that the delivery would be easy.

She wondered what her child would be like. Her son would appear in her mental horizon for a while and then fade away suddenly. She tried to create a definite picture of her son and retain it in her mind, but she did not succeed. In her dreamy state, a sudden cry of the infant would be heard and she would get up startled and look around.

Suddenly, on the 3rd of July, the labor started. The pains grew in intensity and became unbearable. She turned restlessly in bed. It appeared as if delivery might take place at any moment. But then the pains would subside and disappear.

The next day, as on the previous day, the pains started again. It looked as if that the child was on the way. But the pains disappeared again as quickly as they appeared. Thus six days had elapsed with false pains appearing and disappearing, straining Bharati's nerves.

It was the 8th of July. At midnight, labor started extremely violently and painfully. Bharati twirled and twisted, crying loudly. People around her were beginning to worry about her survival.

To prevent the turning of the child into a horizontal position, the midwife tried to tie a piece of cloth tightly around Bharati's belly; but it was to no avail. As if unwilling to enter this world, the child turned away. The midwife used all her experience and skill and with great difficulty turned the child into the normal position. She then remarked, 'The little insolent fellow is tumultuous.'

There were indications that a new being was about to come out into this world, making its way through the mother's womb. Slowly its head started to become visible. Immediately Saraswati noted the time.

A babe was born. An old lady rang a silver plate significantly. As soon as the infant came out, he started to cry "*kar*, *kar*", as if he was reluctant to come into this world. It was difficult to pacify him.

Bharati was exhausted. The midwife severed the umbilical card with the help of a thread. The day was Suddha Padyami (the first day) of the Ashadha Month in the year of Kalayukta. The birth constellation was Punarvasu. The time of birth was 6.15 am. According to the English calendar, the day was 9th July 1918.

The midwife received higher remuneration for her hard work than was agreed upon. Durgamma also presented her with new saris. She said to the midwife, 'In your blessed hands we passed through some difficult times. We cannot forget your help in our lifetime.' The midwife replied respectfully, 'At one stage, my hands and legs became stiff; I didn't know what to do. I struggled hard and at times even worried about your daughter's survival. This is an abnormal delivery. She had labor pains seven times like cyclones and I have never seen such a difficult delivery before.'

Looking again and again at the blessed infant sleeping soundly in the linen, Bharati forgot all her earlier torment. As usual, her imagination was in full swing. She dreamed

of herself as Yasoda and her infant as the boy Krishna playing childhood pranks. She thought, 'This child is a divine gift of my Lord Sri Krishna. He graced me with this gift. Therefore he is born with a specific purpose. He should be brought up in a special manner since he has a bright future. His name and fame will make my life a historic one.'

Durgamma heard her daughter muttering "Krishna, Krishna" and woke her up with great difficulty. Bharati opened her eyes as if she descended from a different plane and stared around. After a moment, with a feeble voice, she asked for a little water to drink. Durgamma had already prepared a special concoction of marking nuts and kept it ready. That potion quenched Bharati's thirst. She heard clearly the sweet music of the divine flute of Sri Krishna.

After three days, making her dreams a mere illusion, Bharati had an attack of pleurisy. She was running high temperature. She appeared weak and anemic. Her golden complexion turned into a black hue. Different doctors treated her with various medications.

The condition of Bharati took a turn to the worse. Bands of wet cloth were applied on her forehand again and again in vain. Medicines also became ineffective. She could not retain even liquid diet. She also developed hiccups. Her feet and legs went out of control. Gradually her body became stiff. But she was repeating "Krishna, Krishna" in a low tone of voice, as if she was in a state of delirium.

Even though she was struggling for her life, her dream world continued to be active. And the child was crying constantly. Bharati groaned aloud for a while, repeating the word "Krishna". Durgamma was roused from her sleep and she asked her daughter, 'What happened, child, have you had a bad dream?' Bharati opened her eyes a little.

Bharati thought that she was born with an ultimate purpose; after it was fulfilled she had no place on the earth. Her body was used as a tool for the birth of a child for a divine purpose. Why should she be afraid of death? With such thoughts, the mind of Bharati gradually settled into a peaceful state.

In her heart of hearts she held an important idea to express. She was feeling restless and anxious. Who will look after her son after her? Who will shoulder the responsibility of his future? Who will nurture him? Who should be entrusted with this heavy responsibility? Her husband who had loved her in thought, word and dead? Probably not. Then who else? Finally her thoughts took a concrete shape. She felt calm at heart and breathed easily.

Bharati moved this way and that in her bed and beckoned her melancholic mother to come nearer. She told her in a feeble voice, 'Please send word for father. I have to talk to him.'

Unsure that her daughter would survive till her husband returned from Gudiwada, Durgamma begged her in a convulsive tone, 'Please speak out to us and we will convey your message to your father.'

Bharati shook her head and said, 'I should talk to him in person. Send for him right away.' A messenger rushed to Gudiwada for Pantulu. For some unknown reason her father had a wish to see his daughter at about the same time and was getting ready anyway to return to Machilipatnam.

Gopala Krishna Murty Pantulu looked at his daughter in her deathbed. His heart sunk at seeing her condition. Bharati slowly lifted her eyelids and looked at her father with content. She tried to speak out something. She wetted her lips slowly with her tongue and moaned.

'Our daughter has been waiting to tell you something,' reported Durgamma.

Pantulu sat near his daughter's bed and, holding her hand, he looked into her eyes. Bharati gathered all her sinking energy and muttered: 'Father, look at him,' she pointed to the cradle and the infant. Durgamma, Saraswati and others were all present.

Bharati thought of her favorite deity Krishna for a moment and began to speak out slowly, in a feeble voice: 'Father, he is not an ordinary child. His birth is unique. He is the gift of my Lord Krishna. I believe that he is born for a purpose. He will attain great heights in future.' Bharati looked at the child again and said, 'I'm certain.' She stopped to catch her breath.

She gathered energy and said again, 'Father, do not bring him up like an ordinary child. Please create a great philosophical and spiritual atmosphere around him; he should be brought up only in such environment.' She breathed heavily for a while and spoke, 'Only in your utmost care can he attain fulfillment. I am sure of it.'

While lying on the deathbed Bharati revealed her mind to her father. She felt that her husband and others would not be able to carry out her wishes properly. So she entrusted this heavy responsibility to her father. She had a great respect for him and an immense faith in him. Her husband might marry again and beget a number of children. Under the care of a stepmother her son would not receive the care and attention he needed.

Her father responded to her without hesitation: 'Your word is as good as the holy Veda for me, my dear child. I will bring up your son as per your wish; I will provide the necessary spiritual atmosphere around him.'

Bharati appeared to be pleased by her father's promise. She looked at him thankfully.

Durgamma was very much perturbed. With a tremulous voice she asked Bharati. 'Anything else? Please speak out, dear.' She too wanted to share the responsibility of the child. It was clear that Bharati was nearing the end of her life. She thought for a while and muttered, 'Mother, do not punish him. Do not scold him. Never hurt his feelings. And let him never feel my absence. Look after him like your own child. This is my last wish.' Bharati was breathing heavily.

Durgamma was standing by the bedside sobbing, tears rolling down her cheeks. Saraswati wept continuously and her eyes turned red. All the relatives were standing by the bed with gloomy eyes.

Bharati's heart felt relieved. She would no longer be afraid of death. She was ready for it.

The last moments were approaching fast. Her son was sleeping in the cradle; he was brought to her to let her bid her last goodbyes to him. There was immense happiness in her eyes as she looked at him.

The last moments of sunset cast a strange, oppressive and eerie light inside the room. All of sudden, it started to rain. At a distance, the birds on the trees were making all sorts of queer sounds. Bharati's eyes were rolling up and unsteady. Her eyelids were heavy. Her body was turning cold and sweaty, and her heart was beating slower.

Bharati was losing her consciousness and her lips were moving indistinctively. Perhaps she was murmuring, "Krishna, Krishna".

Bharati's closed her eyes for the last time. Her breathing became slow. She was lifted from the bed and laid on a mat on which some old clothes were spread. A little *tulasi* water was forcibly slipped into her mouth and she appeared to have swallowed it. The lamp in the niche began to flutter. The lizard on the wall made a frightful cry. A thunderbolt was heard far away. Bharati's body became totally still. A lightning flashed outside. The light of the lamp in the niche died out.

The whole household was plunged in deep sorrow and the cries disturbed the sleeping child in the cradle. He woke up and his cries joined the rest. On that day, the life of Bharati came to an end at 7.30 pm. It was the 16th July 1918.

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Uppaluri Sitaramayya considered seven proposals for his marriage. Bharati's proposal was the seventh one. She had labor for seven days before her son was born. And she passed away seven days after his birth. Perhaps the future life of this child too would be linked with the number seven.

The neighbors remarked, 'How cruel, fate robbed him of his mother soon after his birth. Nothing more unfortunate can be imagined than a motherless child. Who knows what future has in store for him.'

7. Crises of Early Childhood

Bharati passed away prematurely at the age of barely sixteen years. After performing her funeral rites in Machilipatnam, Gopala Krishna Murty Pantulu and his wife returned to Gudiwada with the infant child in their arms, along with their adopted son, Jagannadham.

To the on-lookers they appeared like zombies. Jagannadham's wife received the infant from the arms of Durgamma and placed him in a cradle.

On entering the house, Durgamma was over-powered by grief and fainted on the bed. Relatives, friends and other well-wishers visited them one after the other and expressed their condolences. Pantulu lay back in a "Narsaraopet" easy chair calmly like a *karma* yogi.

Pantulu received messages of condolence from Adyar as well as other places in the state, as also from his friends and fellow lawyers.

On receiving the news that Bharati had passed away, Sitaramayya was sorrow-struck. When he went to Gudiwada a few months later, Venkatappayya sank in his shoes on hearing the heart-rending news.

***

Within a few days after his daughter's death, a friend of Pantulu came running to him with a report: 'Have you heard this ghastly news, Pantulu? It seems that your son-in-law is marrying again this coming Thursday. Only a fortnight ago he lost his wife. He is in such a hurry to marry again.'

On hearing the news, Pantulu was aghast. He recovered from the shock slowly and explained the news away by saying, 'He is so young, after all. He should marry again some day if not today.'

Upon knowing this, Durgamma flared up in volcanic rage. Pantulu pacified her. Later it was learned that Sitaramayya re-married posthaste because he had to perform his late mother's death anniversary ceremony later that year. Only a married son was permitted to perform it, not a widower. The name of his second wife was Suryakantam and she hailed from the Nidamarthi family. Sitaramayya was then only 21 years of age.

As days went by, the financial conditions of Venkatappayya deteriorated. Earlier, he had lost his wife and now his daughter-in-law had passed away. The earlier attempts of Sitaramayya to obtain employment bore fruit. The great freedom fighter, Dr. Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya had founded the Andhra Insurance Company by that time, and with the help of a favorable recommendation from Vemuri Durga Nageswara Rao, Sitaramayya got employment in the company.

Sitaramayya started his family life afresh and thus his role as a father in bringing up his son had almost ended; he remained a mere biological father. The innocent child had

lost his mother immediately after his birth and was separated from his father under strange circumstances.

***

Minakshi and Gopalam, the children of Rukmini, Pantulu's eldest daughter who had died earlier, were already under Durgamma's care. Now, the child of Bharati joined them. Jagannadham, too, had children of his own.

Pantulu wanted his wife to return to normalcy. He thought that they two might go on a pilgrimage to sacred places to have a change of place and gain mental peace. But later he gave up the idea in view of the difficulty of taking an infant with them. However, clothes were distributed to poor children in the name of Bharati's son.

To keep his wife's mind occupied, Pantulu invited a *bhajan* party from Bezawada along with its orchestra to stay as his guests for a week. The invitees sang devotional songs every morning, evening and night. They were ardent devotees who sung in praise of God, neglecting even to eat or drink. The house of Pantulu reverberated with the singing.

Holding her grandson in her lap, Durgamma sang devotional songs and became absorbed in them. Gradually she overcame her immense grief and melancholy, and regained her peace of mind. At the time of worship, she started hearing the sound of "*om*, *om*" again and again, in low tone. She did not know where the sound was emanating from. At prayer time, she sometimes had visions of unknown realms. At times she saw divine light too.

Thus her devotions gradually grew deeper. She began to feel an invisible presence near her. One day Durgamma noticed a hand on the wall scribble some *mantra* and disappear soon after.

She related her strange experiences to her husband. He commented, 'you are blessed, Durga; I have been meditating for so many years and yet I am not as lucky as you are. Please continue in your path. Some day, when the time is right, some great invisible person may give you initiation. And keep your experiences to yourself. They should not be disclosed to others.'

Ascetics of different spiritual attainments, philosophers, scholars and logicians used to visit Pantulu and he played host to all of them happily. Thus, the necessary foundation was laid for the transformation of Pantulu's residence into a philosophical and spiritual center.

Durgamma started to attend to her domestic work in a normal fashion. Jagannadham, the adopted son of Pantulu, moved to Bezawada. After adopting him, Pantulu got him educated and also bequeathed him a share in his property. Following his marriage, Jagannadham settled in Bezawada as a lawyer. Pantulu believed that everyone should work hard and prosper by his own effort. He did not like anyone to idle away his time spending ancestral property.

***

Bharati's son was not fortunate enough to enjoy his mother's affection or milk. He did not relish cow milk, buffalo milk or canned milk. The milk was not digested and led to loose bowels. He developed a small cough too. His grandparents looked for a wet nurse. It was learned that a woman belonging to the Goud community had just delivered a baby and would be able to feed another baby also. Her name was Gowri. She was summoned and hired immediately.

Gowri could not believe her ears. She wondered if she, a poor woman coming from a lower stratum of society, could suckle a child from a rich Brahmin family. She noticed that the baby was handsome and healthy as if he was God's gift.

Gowri felt that it was her good fortune to take the infant into her arms. She felt thrilled and tried anxiously to nurse him. But the child was indifferent. Gowri patiently tried to make friends with him by lulling him and fondling him tenderly. After some time, a sort of concord, and eventually even a bond, developed between him and his "hired" mother. He allowed Gowri to nurse him. Every day she would come three or four times to nurse the child.

Gowri knew that Brahmins observe the highest level of cleanliness generally. She cleaned her breast thoroughly before feeding the child. She kept herself also quite clean and tidy. She enjoyed suckling him, she did not know why; perhaps it was the compensation she was receiving from Durgamma.

***

As mentioned before, Minakshi and Gopalam, the children of the late Rukmini, were also being looked after by their grandmother Durgamma. Their father married again and lived elsewhere. Thus the responsibility of looking after all the three children fell on Durgamma. Minakshi was six years old and Gopalam three or four. Meenakshi played with her younger brother and cousin, looked after them and assisted Durgamma in her household chores.

When Bharati was alive, she used to rock Minakshi and Gopalam in cradles and sing them lullabies. Durgamma too sang the same lullabies to Bharati's son. Also when Bharati was a child, Durgamma sang to her that same song, "Kasturi Ranga Ranga", which praised Lord Krishna's childhood heroics of killing the evil king Kamsa.

The customary naming ceremony which is performed in Brahmin families was not performed for Bharati's son for some reason. As the boy's mother was an ardent devotee of Lord Sri Krishna, everyone thought that "Gopala Krishnamurti" would be an appropriate name for the child. So everyone called him "Krishna" or "Krishnudu", while Pantulu called him "Kittu". Durgamma called him "Ramudu" because her husband's name was also Gopala Krishna Murty and it was forbidden in Brahmin families for a lady to mention her husband's name or address him by his name.

***

After sometime, for some unknown reason, Gowri's service as a wet nurse was discontinued and the boy was fed cow's milk for some time. The milk did not agree with him; so they looked for another wet nurse. A woman from the cowherd community came forward to feed the child.

At the age of five months, Krishna started rolling on the floor and was resisting strangers. There were indications that the child had definite likes and dislikes even at this age. He was able to recognize his grandmother and his cousin Minakshi. He would smile at them.

***

At the age of seven months, Krishna was crawling fast and hiding himself playfully behind things. People had to search for him anxiously.

After Krishna started to crawl freely, Pantulu became interested in finding out the field in which his grandson might flourish in the future. Accordingly, in the corner of a room, some money, a book and a pen were placed at a distance from the child and the child was allowed to crawl toward them. The boy grasped the book again and again, three times.

It was believed that if a child picked money, in future he would earn lots of it; if he selected a pen, it would indicate that in his future life he would serve as an administrator; and if he chose a book, it would be a sign that he would be a great scholar or a learned person later in his life.

***

One evening, Krishna crawled out of the house silently into the yard and sat under a pomegranate tree. He had a toy in his hand. There were some fields behind the house, and a snake crawled over the retaining wall from the fields and slowly moved toward him. No one observed it. It approached Krishna and coiled on itself near him. The child did not notice the snake. He was absorbed in the toy in his hand.

Durgamma came out of the house to collect the clothes that were hanging on the clothesline for drying. She noticed the boy under the tree and panicked, 'Oh my God, when did he come here and how?' She approached him but suddenly she was terrified to see the coiled snake near him.

For a moment she thought of picking up the child but stood there paralyzed for fear that any movement on her part might provoke the snake. The boy was not bothered about the snake. Now and then he moved his head and hands in different directions as if calling someone. At moments he smiled happily.

The other members of the household came out and they too saw Durgamma and the child and started to panic. Someone ran out the other door to fetch a snake charmer.

After a little while, the snake unwound itself and slid toward the boy. Durgamma thought she would die. Her eyes were transfixed. The snake came near the boy slowly and at any moment the boy might be tempted to stretch his hand toward it. Durgamma felt that time stood still while she prayed God for help.

The snake steadily moved forward as if it was gazing at the child. It was a long snake of a couple of arms-length and light brown in color. The child looked at the moving snake with wide-open eyes. He did not try to get hold of it. The snake passed by him. It crawled up the wall and Krishna watched it attentively till it was out of his sight. After the snake disappeared totally, Durgamma gathered her courage to pick up the child and hug him. Everyone felt that the child escaped a danger miraculously that day.

The snake charmer rushed out to catch the snake, but he was disappointed; he looked for it on the other side of the wall in vain.

* * *

It was noticed that Krishna had been looking dull and sickly for the past few days. Durgamma could not explain why. Medicines were ineffective. Suddenly it struck to her that the child was getting drowsy and dull immediately after feeding. She suspected that the wet nurse had been dropping a minute quantity of something in the child's mouth just before suckling him.

Immediately, Durgamma confronted her. The woman first denied any wrongdoing but finally confessed that she had been getting him addicted to a little opium, to protect her nipples from his painful bites. She pleaded for mercy. But Durgamma immediately paid her the wages that were due her and turned her out. Afterwards, Krishna was fed bottled milk, in spite of his disliking it.

***

Once, on one of the holidays, when everyone was busy, Krishna suddenly disappeared. He had been playing with his toys till then in that room. Minakshi searched for him and finally located him in a corner underneath the bed. Immediately she shouted, 'Granny, here he is!' Durgamma looked under the bed and noticed that the boy was sitting cross-legged as if he was in a yoga posture. And she was shocked to find a dead scorpion nearby. It was covered with ants. There was a train of ants crawling over the legs of Krishna and he was unmindful of them. He looked like a little idol in a temple. Durgamma quickly got hold of the child and brought him out from under the bed.

***

Krishna was a demanding boy. If he wanted something, it should be in his hands instantly. It was impossible to distract his attention from it. If one tried to frighten him with the boogieman, he would pay a deaf ear and continue with his demand. Generally children like to be picked up and held. But Krishna was different. He appeared as if he did not need the help or support of anyone.

If anyone distributed eatable things to other children before he was offered, he would reject them. He felt he was superior and always liked to be on top in everything.

Generally, children are afraid of darkness, but Krishna was never afraid of it. He was fearless.

While he was playing with toys, if other children had approached him, he always invited them to play with him and would offer his toys to them in a friendly fashion. While he was eating anything, if a younger or older boy stretched out his hand before him, he would always share his food with him without hesitation.

At the age of eight months, at nighttime, when Krishna felt the urge to urinate, he would slowly slide down the bed to crawl away a little distance. Once he fell from the bed on his back. Durgamma rushed to pick him up. There was a bump on his head from the fall. But Krishna did not cry. Applying a little wet lime on the bump, Durgamma thought, 'this kid is made of steel.'

For his first birthday celebration Pantulu ordered a silver string to be tied around the waist of the child. A golden chain decorated his neck. Bharati, when she was still alive, had a photograph of herself standing by the side of a statue of Lord Krishna, playing his flute. Durgamma helped the boy to garland his mother's photograph which was now placed in the prayer room.

On Krishnastami[10] in memory of her daughter, Durgamma dressed her grandson as Balakrishna.[11] Silver tinkling bells were tied around his girdle and ankles. He was decked with golden jewelry. A peacock feather was perched in his hair.

* * *

Durgamma raised Krishna with all love and care. Yet, the boy had a special liking for his grandfather. Whenever Pantulu returned home from work, he would rush to the door to lead him in. He always liked to be around his grandfather.

Pantulu was a disciplinarian. But he relaxed his rules somewhat for his grandson. He did not utter even a single word against the child. Nor did he pamper him. He kept quiet and looked grim when Krishna played his childish pranks.

***

One day, while playing happily, Krishna leaned sideways and his hands and feet began to shake. His body was getting twisted all over. Durgamma was terrified and she immediately started a home cure. There was no improvement. These infantile convulsions appear in children at even years of age, for instance, at two, four or six years. There was a popular belief that the problem could be helped if the area between the eyebrows is scorched with a smoldering cigar. Krishna was writhing in epileptic fits. Durgamma felt helpless. Some powders mixed with honey were fed to him. And, by that time, Pantulu returned home.

After a little while, Krishna became conscious and gradually gained his composure. It was not clear which treatment, if any, was effective. He appeared to have hiccups for a while but soon he quieted down. He felt easy and stood up. His toes became straight

with jerky movements. He appeared weak and was given a little hot milk. In ten minutes, he was normal and active again. Durgamma smeared a little sacred ash on his forehead.

***

While Pantulu prayed in his prayer room Krishna showed keen interest. He would observe the entire process with rapt attention. Slowly he began to imitate his grandfather. He developed a passion for devotion to God.

At the age of about two-and-a-half years, he smeared sacred ash on his forehead and tried to meditate like his grandfather, sitting in *padmasana*. He would go on in his meditation even after his grandfather finished. When his grandfather was away, Krishna would go into the prayer room alone to meditate as usual and pray to God with folded hands. Durgamma was impressed with his devotion and pointed him to her visitors. Pleased with the devoutness of his grandson, Pantulu presented him with a silver board to sit on and pray. Krishna was happy with the present and ran about the house shouting in joy. He was in the ninth cloud.

Pantulu had a special prayer room on the second floor. No one was allowed to go into it. One day, his grandson followed him to the door of that room. Pantulu politely directed his grandson to have his prayers on the first floor. That probably disappointed Krishna somewhat.

***

At the age of three, Krishna's hair was ready to be offered at Tirupati to the deity Lord Venkateswara. The child had a strong liking for travel. He was always leading others at the gate in a train or bus station.

This time it was journey by train – all the more the better for him. In the train, Krishna sat in the lap of his grandfather. He was cheerful throughout the journey. In Tirupati, everyone started to walk up the hill from its bottom. When they reached a certain place on the way, at the bottom of a hillock called "Stars Hillock", they found that cloth-covered palanquins, called "Dolis", were available to carry pilgrims further up. Krishna wanted to travel by a Doli. Pantulu fixed up a Doli for him and Durgamma.

Krishna enjoyed this new means of transport. The Doli carriers were naturally very tired by the time they had reached the Knee Pass and they rested there for a while. They arrived at the top of the hill after some time. The place is called Tirumalai. They stayed in a choultry[12]. Krishna was thrilled at the new surroundings and strange faces. Moreover, he was going to see God! That idea made him all the more ecstatic.

Alas, all his happiness had vanished when he was told that he had to get his head shaved! It was something totally unexpected. On their way to the barber he turned around abruptly, protesting the prospect vehemently. All sorts of persuasions from people around could not change his mind. Even threats were in vain.

Krishna ran around aimlessly. Pantulu caught hold of him skillfully, but Krishna struggled to escape from his grip crying, ‘No, no, I don't want to give my hair; no, I won't.’ Durgamma pleaded humbly, reminding him that it was a promise they had made to the God. ‘Let him be God or the grandfather of God; I don't care. I won't offer my hair to him,’ shouted Krishna adamantly.

Pantulu tried to tempt him with a new English hat and even a new pair of sandals, all to no avail. On seeing the barber with a razor in his hand, his screams grew even louder. His face turned red. He warned the barber that he would scratch him with his nails if he touched him.

Pantulu and Jagannadham lost their patience and held him firmly against his will. Very quickly, the barber sprinkled a little water on Krishna’s head and shaved him. Being overpowered, Krishna kept complaining throughout the whole procedure.

While looking at the shaven hair on the ground, Krishna lamented in a low tone, ‘What a God! What does He do with my hair?’ Durgamma tried to convince him, ‘No child, don't say that. If you give God your hair, he will give you whatever you want.’

After his bath, they proceeded toward the main temple. There was a long line of pilgrims. In the line Krishna was pinching everyone. He made faces at them like a monkey. But as he looked handsome, other pilgrims ignored his mischief and smiled at him. He was expressing his anger at his God in his own fashion.

Pantulu asked his grandson to bow to God. Krishna bowed unwillingly and appeared to have questioned him, ‘Why do you want my hair?’

Krishna was still angry when he came out of the temple,. He did not talk to anyone. After some time he grew calmer and said to himself, 'Oh God, you forced me to act against my will. So I will never come to you again. Why do you want my hair? What will you do with that? I will never come to you again. Do what you may!’

To resist and fight out any issue with anyone, if he was opposed to it, seemed to be one of Krishna natural traits.

***

At the age of four, Krishna developed infantile convulsions again seriously and fell suddenly. He began to writhe like a 'fish out of the pond.' Medicines were not effective. Pantulu performed a special worship of Lord Shiva, the conqueror of death. After sometime, Krishna’s condition improved and he became normal.

But he had severe stomach ache occasionally. Sometimes the pain was more than he could bear. Durgamma got him some treatment which took care of it. Krishna had also intermittent cough. He was getting tired easily. It appeared as though the cough was affecting his digestion and his alimentary canal. Fasting was considered the best remedy. He could not eat or drink anything. By fasting for a day his health was restored to normalcy.

***

It was observed that Krishna was very intelligent by birth and wiser than other boys of his age. He used to observe everyone closely and imitate them. He was accompanying his grandfather to different types of performances of artists such as Harikatha *bhagavatars*[13] and was imitating them for the amusement of others.

When his grandfather was away, Krishna used to wear a *dhoti*, a shirt and a turban like his grandfather. He would sit in the office of his grandfather and mimic his gestures. He was very skillful doing impressions.

In the house, he used to overhear comments made about others very often. A distant relative once stayed with them for a few days. Durgamma did not like her. She commented, 'Subhadra is a glutton. She always wants to eat something or other. She has a potbelly. She can very easily gulp in a potful of rice. She does not move from her seat, yet I wonder how she digests it all. What a lazy lubber!' Krishna overheard Durgamma's comments about Subhadra.

That night, when Subhadra was about to eat her dinner, Krishna approached her and asked, 'Show me your potbelly. How can you eat a potful of rice?' Then, Krishna turned to his grandmother and asked her, 'Grandma, isn't she the person you were talking about a little while ago?' Durgamma was shocked.

***

Krishna liked Lord Ganesha very much. His elephant trunk, big belly, winnowing basket-like ears, short stature and other odd features attracted him. Lord Ganesha is believed to destroy all hurdles that a devotee may be facing in his or her daily tasks.

***

One day, Gopalam suddenly developed infantile convulsions and began to writhe. Durgamma noticed it and called for help. Pantulu was talking to somebody in his office at that time. He rushed in. Doctors were called in to treat Gopalam. Within a short time, the situation deteriorated and Gopalam died, plunging everyone in grief. Krishna was shocked. Such a little while ago, the boy was playing with him and talking to him; and now he had suddenly passed away. Krishna could not understand why Gopalam had to die. Gopalam's body was taken to the burial ground outside the town. Since he was a child, there was no cremation or a formal funeral; he was simply buried. Thus Minakshi lost her brother.

Krishna liked his cousin Gopalam very much but he did not know that earlier. While moving about in the house, Krishna felt his absence. One thing was clear to Krishna: he would never be able to see the dead boy again, play with him or talk to him.

In course of time Krishna overcame his sadness.

***

The house of Pantulu was often visited by a number of palmists and astrologers. Once, a devotee of Shiva visited Pantulu. People believed that he could prophesy the future of anyone by merely looking at the face of the subject. Pantulu always asked his grandson to bow to such visitors and receive their blessings.

The devotee of Shiva observed Krishna closely for a little while and closed his eyes. Later, he informed Pantulu that the boy had the grace of Shiva. 'The boy has a great future; he would bring name and fame for the family. But there are some misfortunes and perils ahead during his childhood. With the grace of Shiva, he will overcome all of them. Please take good care of him,' he told Pantulu.

* * *

After a few months, while playing at home in the presence of others, Krishna became unconscious. This time it was not convulsions because his limbs were not moving abnormally. His hands and legs were not shaking. Durgamma sprinkled water on his face and rubbed his cold feet. The boy was still. Durgamma did not know what to do. And Pantulu was out of town. Someone rushed to the doctor and the doctor examined him carefully. Krishna's pulse as well as his breathing seemed to have stopped. For some reason, the doctor did not want to declare him dead. The face of the boy still had a glow and liveliness. Within a few minutes, there was a little movement and slow breathing. The doctor could also feel the pulse. After five minutes, Krishna woke up as if from deep sleep. The doctor was totally at a loss to understand what had happened to the boy.

Durgamma immediately went to the Bhimeswara Temple and worshipped the God there. Her grandson was given a bit of the consecrated food.

Within a few days, Krishna again had convulsions, for the third time. His limbs began to shake and his head was hanging sideways. His body was making sudden jerky movements time and again. Medicines were ineffective. Prayers did not yield any fruit. Durgamma collapsed in the corner of a room weeping constantly. This disease was believed to be hereditary. Pantulu remembered that he too had it in his childhood. Perhaps, this boy too would die like Gopalam.

Krishna was made to lie on a mat on the floor. Everyone lost hopes for his survival. Time appeared to have been frozen. After a little while, Krishna's legs and hands became normal again and every limb began to function. He opened his eyes slowly and looked at everybody. He breathed heavily once and got up. Everyone felt relieved.

'It is rare that a child faces infantile convulsions three times like this in a row and still survives. Actually, Krishna was born on the special day when Lord Shiva appeared as Kalasamhara Murti, that is, the day on which Lord Shiva conquered Death. Moreover, that is the day when Markandeya was blessed to live for ever by the grace of Lord Shiva,' remarked a lady. Thus, Krishna was considered to have the grace of Lord Shiva. It appeared that the boy had the special trait of virtually dying and being born again

repeatedly.

***

Time rolled on. Durgamma used to narrate a number of stories to Krishna at bedtime – the classical stories of Prahlada, Dhruva and the boyhood stories of Lord Sri Krishna. Krishna would have his occasional questions which she sometimes found difficult to answer. The stories of Prahlada and Dhruva induced devotion in his heart.

After some time, Krishna started to sleep with his grandfather. He might have probably thought that there were no more stories for his grandmother to tell him. Pantulu used to tell him a few new as well as some old stories. His style of narrating old stories was different and more interesting.

Krishna asked his grandfather other types of questions such as: how does the chime in the wall clock make a sound? Why should it be wound? How does a single engine pull a train full of wagons?

8. The Sprouting of the Seed

Pantulu remembered the prophecy of his daughter, Bharati. As per his promise to her on her deathbed, he planned to create an appropriate philosophical and spiritual atmosphere in his house.

Scholars were appointed to chant the Vedas every day. Early in the morning, *Purushasuktam*, *Namakam* and *Chamakam* were recited. Some Brahmins were assigned the recitation of *Vishnu Sahasranamas*. *Siva Stotram* and Verses from *Saundaryalahari* of Sankaracharya and other classical verses were also recited daily.

Pantulu invited scholars from all over India to take part in philosophical discussions. His house was transformed into a nucleus for dissemination of Vedic philosophy and spirituality. Important gurus, heads of monasteries, preachers, ascetics and such visited the house of Pantulu. Theories of karma, rebirth, birthlessness, Brahman, salvation and Non-Dualism were discussed.

Thus the surrounding atmosphere acted as a preparatory ground for Krishna's spiritual flowering in his later life. Indeed, he was much happier with this ambience than playing with friends. The spiritual ground had become his playground.

Pantulu devoted himself to the Theosophical Society while molding his own life in accordance with ancient traditions at the same time. He also succeeded in modifying his house as a spiritual and philosophical center for the sake of the development and progress of his grandson. He spent much time and money to achieve these objectives.

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Until he became conscious Krishna did not know that he was motherless. He had been presuming that his grandmother was his mother. It seemed to him that he had no father either. Everyone had a mother. Why not he? Where had she gone? Why? He asked his grandmother, 'Where is my mother?'

'God took her away'

'When will she return?'

'She won't'

'Why not?'

'God keeps good people with Him.'

'Then how can I see my mother?'
'You should pray to God.'

'What happens then?'

'God will be pleased with your devotion. He will appear before you and will grant you whatever you wish. What will you wish?'

'I will ask him to show me my mother'

Then He will immediately show you your mother.'

'Will she stay away with me after that?'

'No.'

'Why not?'

'Because she is an angel.'

'What did she look like?'

'You imagine her as you wish.'

The boy became thoughtful; but he could not imagine her features. He could not imagine her because she was an angel and angels are invisible.

Krishna inquired about his father. He received the answer that 'He is living somewhere and working. He will come to see you at his convenience.' Krishna was not informed of his father's remarriage or of the fact that he had some other offspring besides him.

Krishna thought within himself, 'When I grow up, I will pray and please God. I will ask him to show me my mother.' Pantulu worshipped regularly. Krishna began to sit with him and watch the process of worship.

Even in early childhood, Krishna was pious. Pantulu was proud of his grandson; he arranged a separate prayer room for him. Krishna did not allow anyone into his prayer room. A number of pictures and idols of different gods were arranged in the room the way he liked and he worshipped them in his own fashion.

Earlier, Krishna was sleeping with his grandfather on the same bed. But now he was provided with a separate bed. At midnight, however, Krishna would wake up and sneak into his grandfather's bed. When Krishna woke up in the morning, to his great surprise he would always find himself back on his own bed. He did not know how he got there. Later, he understood that his grandfather carefully and quietly brought him back to his own bed. So, thereafter, when he woke up at midnight, Krishna began to crawl underneath his grandfather's bed and slept there. What he wanted was the proximity of his grandfather, whether it was under or above the bed, it didn't matter. Grandfather was everything to him.

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By the time he was five-years old, Krishna was mentally sharp and his memory was powerful. He impressed everybody with his ability to memorize anything in a very short time.

In the early hours of each day, his house resounded with the chanting of Vedic verses. Krishna would wake up slowly to the sound of the recitation. Gradually he too began to recite. Sometimes, without knowing what he was doing, Krishna would involuntarily get up from his bed and walk up to the place where the verses were being chanted. He would sit there in a semiconscious state. On days when there was no chanting, he still felt he was listening to it.

In those years, he memorized a number of philosophical works like *Panchadasi* and *Naishkarmyasiddhi*. He could recite verses from them just as any scholar would. If someone asked him to quote a particular verse, he would recite it instantly. If he was asked for the context and reference of a certain verse, he could supply them.

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One day, Pantulu asked Krishna, 'Kittu, I am going to Madras. Will you come with me?' Krishna was pleasantly surprised and he immediately answered, 'Yes, I'm ready. Wherever you want to take me, I'll go with you.' The boy had a fascination for travel. Moreover, the present journey was to be by train.

He did not sleep much that night. Now and then he would look out the window waiting for the day to dawn. Early in the morning, he packed his clothes and got ready to go. Both of them went to Bezawada and then traveled by train to Madras. It was the first time for Krishna to visit the Theosophical Society in Adyar. He was wondering at the persons, buildings and atmosphere all around. He felt as if he stepped into a brave new world.

That evening he was walking alone along the beach collecting interesting-looking shells. From behind him a gentleman approached him and began to collect a few shells for him.

The boy looked at him and wondered for a while at his pure white, perhaps even whiter than jasmine, dress. He held a strange attraction for Krishna. The gentleman walked ahead of him. Krishna stood still, watching him till he was out of sight.

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Bangalore was Pantulu's summer resort. He lived in a rented house near Sankara Math in the Basavannagudi Temple area. Children would accompany him. This time, Narasimha Rao, son of Saraswati followed him, along with Minakshi.

In Bangalore, Pantulu arranged the alphabet-learning ceremony for Krishna. According to the Kannada Tradition, the boy was to be dressed in a long coat, a loose pajama and a turban. At an auspicious moment he would be taught the alphabet for the first time.

On returning home from Bangalore, Pantulu sent his grandson to a nearby elementary school. Till then Krishna was like a free bird. But now he did not like to be regimented by the schedule of the school. He began to abhor the very idea of school. But he had to go to school and he did so without much interest. He was often irritated. The facial expressions of teachers and their behavior repelled him. Discipline was considered more important in the school than teaching.

Krishna was classified as a "special case" by virtue of his social status. Even otherwise, he would never go unnoticed wherever he might be. He attracted attention and admiration.

He was a boisterous and blithe little boy full of childish pranks. He was totally carefree; he feared none; he was adventurous, audacious, strong-willed and steadfast. He was kind, humane, considerate and generous. He was talkative and quick-witted. He always had a handful of admirers around him.

Krishna had a number of friends at school. Atluri Venkateswara Rao was his best friend. 'In complexion Krishna was like a ripe white guava fruit – he was handsome. He was born in a rich Brahmin family, but he did not care about the distinctions in society. He was highly sociable and friendly,' he said about Krishna.

On some holidays, all the friends used to assemble at the Mound of Tarts and play there amidst the ruins of the Buddhist *aramas*[14]. The "Mound of Tarts" was a huge area which acted a hub of religious activities in days of yore. Jainism and Buddhism flourished as state religions in ancient Andhra. In course of time, their followers debauched; hence the place was abandoned. But the derogatory name for the place remained.

Now and then these boys would find old copper coins here and there in the ruins of the Mound. Krishna avidly collected the coins and preserved them.

Krishna never went to a restaurant alone. A number of friends always accompanied him and he footed the bill, whatever the amount of it might be. If anyone asked Krishna for a book or any other article, he would give it him freely. He did not care to acquire anything for himself. 'This article is mine. So I should have it and no one else' – he never entertained such thoughts.

In those days, Black Bird brand fountain pens were very expensive. Krishna would get his Black Bird pen to school and sometimes stab the top of the desk with its nib. His classmates looked at him aghast. He knew that the pen was rendered useless but he did not care. After a few days, he would bring another pen and spoil it again in the same fashion. When one of his friends, Raghava Rao, asked him, 'Why do you spoil a pen like that?' He would simply smile and reply, 'just for fun!'

He would freely distribute balloons brought for him from Madras to his friends and then play with the friends. He had a special affection for poor boys.

One day, as usual, Krishna appeared to be inattentive in the class; he was talking to a boy next to him in a low tone of voice. The teacher noticed it. 'Yes, here is a chance for me to shame Krishna before all his friends!' he thought. The teacher continued with his lesson and asked him after he finished, 'Krishna have you understood the lesson?' Krishna replied immediately, 'Yes, sir!' The teacher then asked him to tell the class what he had learned. Krishna clearly explained the entire lesson to the utter dismay of the teacher and amazement of all his classmates. The teacher was puzzled.

In the arithmetic class, the teacher noticed his inattentiveness and asked him to recite a multiplication table. The teacher was embarrassed when Krishna got up and recited the whole table in a moment without a single mistake. None of the teachers in the school had come across such a student before.

Once Krishna opened a book and started reading, he would feel that he was already familiar with the material. If he casually listened to anything, he would not forget it. He was able to recite tongue-twisting Sanskrit verses easily. His pronunciation also was clear. Elderly scholars appreciated his recitation and considered him a child prodigy.

Krishna went to school as a routine but he had no interest in the school curriculum.

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Of late, Krishna had been coughing and Durgamma started her treatment with home remedies. He was given a decoction of black pepper and dried ginger mixed with brown sugar. Krishna was spitting out phlegm and was exhausted easily. One day a streak of blood was noticed and everyone panicked. Pantulu immediately planned to take Krishna to Madras for treatment. Krishna was happy to learn that he would be making a trip to Madras and did not mind the cough.

Pantulu consulted a number of medical experts in Madras. After some tests, the doctors thought that his condition might lead to tuberculosis. Pantulu was nonplussed. In those days, a tuberculosis patient could eventually die. There was no effective treatment for it in any system of medicine. Naturopathy was the only rescue, but it would take a long time.

Fortunately, Pantulu himself was well versed in naturopathy. His personal library contained a number of Indian as well as Western publications on the subject. Immediately, Pantulu started to treat his grandson with tub bathing, clay bathing and sun bathing, which were important components of naturopathy. Krishna's diet was changed. Boiled vegetables, fruit juice, goat milk and its products were his daily special diet.

Early in the morning, everyday, Krishna performed special yoga exercises such as "salutations to the sun". He was also required to do *pranayama*. Pantulu learned that cod liver oil given daily in small doses would strengthen Krishna's immune system. Immediately the oil was ordered from Madras. Although he was reluctant to drink it because of its unpleasant taste and odor, he was forced to. He was asked to wear a small

loincloth and stand in the morning sun. Cod liver oil was applied all over his body and he was exposed to sunlight.

Thanks to all these treatments and *pranayama*, Krishna's cough gradually abated and finally disappeared. His cardio spasm, however, persisted and he had to fast to overcome it.

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In addition to playing games such as hide and seek, Krishna invented new games. Closing all the doors and windows of a room, he would stay inside while all his friends were outside. A small hole would be made in the window for his friends to peep in. Inside the room, he would wear the mask of a tiger and make all sorts of gestures and sounds to entertain his friends. The children called it 'shadow play'.

Pantulu's plans were effective. Krishna developed a deep love for philosophy and spirituality. It probably also gave him a reason to dislike formal schooling. Before he attained even seven years of age, he started to concentrate on the essence of all education, namely, self-knowledge.

Every day, Krishna listened with rapt attention to the Upanishads, *Dakshinamurti Stotram*, *Brahma Sutras*, Bhagavad-Gita and other philosophical works, along with commentaries on them. He would be quite thoughtful while trying to understand Vedic philosophy: 'I must reach the peaks of philosophy and know the Self. I must attain salvation. But how? By meditation? If so, how, when and where? By chanting the sacred *mantra* incessantly?' Hitherto he had wanted to ask God to grant him the gift of showing his mother. But now Krishna prayed for ways and means of attaining salvation.

Krishna used to read classical stories, biographies of yogis, and legends of Prahlada, Markandeya, Dhruva and other great devotees of God. 'I too should be as great as Prahlada or Dhruva,' he thought. He dreamed that he flew to the Himalayas and meditated there. His sole aim was to acquire knowledge of the Self to attain salvation.

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There was a temple of Anjaneya (Hanuman) in Gudiwada. Anjaneya is an ardent devotee of Rama. He is well known for his courage. He is a symbol of strength and devotion. Anjaneya is also called "Bhajarangabali" in many parts of India and people believe that if anyone worships him sincerely, saying "Jai bhajarangabali", he will gain immense strength. All the evil spirits and ghosts will disappear by the mere mention of his name.

Children have a fascination for Anjaneya. Krishna also had faith in him and he was his great devotee. He went to the temple frequently and prayed to Anjaneya petitioning him to fulfill his various desires. He promised him coconuts as payment for his favors. Gradually the number of his promises to the God became too many for him to honor. But if he did not honor them, Anjaneya might be offended! Thereafter, the God might not care for him.

Krishna racked his brains for a solution and suddenly struck upon a plan. Supposing he raised sufficient money to purchase a heap of coconuts; he could offer them to Anjaneya in the temple. The priest patiently would break them all, offer them to the God and return half the number of broken halves to Krishna as consecrated food. But what would he do with so many of them? He would have to collect a number of friends to take them or distribute them from house to house? How would one carry so many coconuts halves from house to house? What is the way out? Should he incur divine wrath? Oh, no!

Suddenly a question flashed in his mind. If Anjaneya is omnipotent, why did he allow his indebtedness grow to such an extent? Did he not know Krishna's limitations? He must have known them. Then? There seemed to be no solution for his problem.

In 1925, it was announced that the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Theosophical society would be organized on a large scale in Adyar, Madras. Pantulu planned to attend the celebrations with his family. But delegations were expected to arrive from all over the world. The number of those attending was expected to be quite large. Pantulu hesitated to go; he was of two minds. He discussed the matter with his wife.

Krishna overheard the discussions attentively. As for himself, he wanted very much to attend the celebrations. When he had been in Adyar before, he was fascinated by the ambience there. Krishna's desire intensified. It took a strange hold of him. His whole desire stood on a single point, suffocating him, as it were. Earlier he would have prayed to Lord Anjaneya for help and his desire would be fulfilled without fail. But now, Krishna was aware of all the myriad dues he owed to the Lord. If requested, the Lord might chide him, 'You have not kept up so many of your promises; how dare you make a new wish now! First clear the old dues; then I will consider your wish.'

So Krishna dropped the idea of appealing to the Lord. Yet his avid desire to go to Madras persisted. He was helpless. Thus pondering, he fell asleep, dreaming about his possible trip to Adyar.

Next morning, when he got up from bed, he was informed that the trip would be made, after all. He was overjoyed. At last, his desire had materialized. But how did this happen? He did not pray to the Lord. He did not know how his grandfather's decision was changed overnight. How could this miracle happen?

After prolonged consideration of this miraculous happening, suddenly a new idea unveiled itself before him. Did he stumble upon something fantastic? Yes! It dawned on him that absolutely his own thought force had worked powerfully and swayed the decision of his grandparents. Therefore, hereafter, he could achieve whatever he ardently wished.

In ancient times, saints and other ascetics were able to curse and cast a spell on someone, if they were displeased with him. They also suggested ways and means of release from the spell. If that was possible for them, why not for him? If they had the power of their meditation, he had the purity of heart. Yes, he could, by thought, word and deed, achieve what he desired.

Krishna settled slowly in this new line of thinking. Without depending upon the gods in the temples or relying on anyone else for help, he wanted to achieve what he wanted by himself with this newly acquired power. Thus at the age of seven, Krishna became convinced that thought had inherent power.

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Pantulu went to Adyar with family to attend the celebrations. Krishna enjoyed his stay there. A number of Europeans and others were also present. He observed their behavior, dignity and demeanor.

One evening, under the great banyan tree of Adyar, Krishna observed an inspiring speaker addressing the august gathering in English. She was clad in a perfectly white dress, like an angel who had just descended from heaven. He did not know who she was nor did he understand what she spoke. He could only guess that she was a great person and that was why the audience was spellbound.

He was thrilled and enthralled. Krishna stood stock still, looking at her with wide-open, unblinking eyes. Her fluency and sweetness of speech could impress anyone. Krishna totally forgot himself and where he was, while the eloquent speaker captivated his attention totally. An ardent desire engulfed him to learn and speak English fluently like her. He should fearlessly converse with the Englishmen, speak like them and get their praise.

She concluded her talk and left the dais. After sometime, Krishna became conscious of himself and the surroundings. Exciting currents of ecstasy moved through his whole being.

Later Krishna learned that the lady was Annie Besant; Pantulu told him that she was called Vasanta Mata by the Telugu people. Krishna observed that his grandfather had a few European acquaintances and that he was talking to them freely. He felt somewhat proud of him.

Pantulu could see that his grandson liked Adyar and its surroundings. He therefore thought that if Krishna was educated there, his ambition for him would be fulfilled without much difficulty; and his daughter's prophesy too would become a reality. He therefore decided to admit him in the Guindy National School which was run under the auspices of the Theosophical Society.

Krishna was happy over the change. He could be rid of the abhorrent teachers he had in Gudiwada. The grandfather and the grandson went to the Guindy School. The buildings and the atmosphere were fascinating. Pantulu told Krishna that the teaching methods in this school were altogether different. Children were not punished with canes here in the name of discipline. Teachers took the viewpoints of children into consideration. They didn't behave like dictators. Theirs was a new approach.

Krishna responded, 'Yes, Grandpa, I will join this school.' Pantulu got him admitted both in the school and in the dormitory.

Pantulu told Durgamma that all their anxiety about Krishna had at last come to an end. He stayed on in Madras for some more days while Durgamma left for Gudiwada the next day.

In the new surroundings and amongst new people, Krishna felt lonely. He had a liking for the change and yet some dislike too. None could converse with him in Telugu while a few talked to him in Tamil and many in English.

After a couple of days, it was announced that a dignitary was visiting the school and would address the students. Students were directed to come to school neatly dressed. When the visitor entered the class, everyone got up from their seats respectfully and saluted him. He too smiled, nodded at them and took his seat. Krishna was stunned to see him. 'Oh, this was the gentleman that helped me long ago to collect a few shells on the beach. I wanted to know at that time who he was. Good. I am happy to see him here now,' he thought. He keenly observed the dignitary and his expression. He was Jiddu Krishnamurti, popularly known as 'Krishnaji'.

Krishnaji addressed the students in English, speaking slowly. Krishna followed him attentively. But after a while he lost his interest. The personality of Krishnaji was commanding. The speaker appeared to be more attractive than his speech.

After four days, Pantulu was talking to someone at his lodge when he suddenly noticed his grandson walking toward him at a distance. He could not believe his eyes. This little fellow had come walking alone all the way from Guindy!

Krishna approached his grandfather slowly and stood before him. He appeared very tired. Pantulu asked him, 'Have you walked up all the way?' The boy silently nodded.

The visitor, while talking leave of Pantulu, looked at Krishna for a minute and remarked, 'How attractive are the eyes of this boy?' After a little while, Pantulu softly questioned Krishna, 'What happened?' 'It's confusing at school. I don't like it. 1 could not sleep. I will not stay there,' replied Krishna, determined.

Pantulu was uneasy and perturbed at this decision of Krishna. Krishna was silent and adamant. He was not afraid of his grandfather's reaction. Pantulu tried patiently to persuade the boy, 'Kittu, this is a great school, unlike the school in Gudiwada. Only the elite send their children here. Not everyone is admitted here. If you wish to be a great person in future, you should continue in this school.'

'I don't know all that. I shall become great by studying in Gudiwada School, but not here. Here everything is confusing. I won't study here,' Krishna repeated.

Pantulu knew the stubborn nature of Krishna. It was impossible to convince him or to change his mind. He could not be forced. Even if he were forced, he would definitely

run away. ‘All right, destiny governs everything. We are only instruments in its hands,’ Pantulu reconciled himself.

Krishna's attitude worried Pantulu. To cheer him up, Pantulu wanted to take him on an outing. ‘Kittu, shall we go on a joy ride, or shall we visit the zoo?’ he asked. In earlier days, if he was made such an offer, Kittu would have jumped at it, but now he was not so enthusiastic. ‘No, I don’t care to,’ he replied briefly.

In those days, tourists and other visitors to Madras could have a bird's eye view of Madras by hovering in an airplane for five rupees per head. Pantulu and Kittu had made that trip once before. While flying in the air through the clouds, Krishna observed the pilot who looked like a great hero to him. He sat in the front in a dignified manner and flew in the plane. How lucky he was! He wanted to travel in a plane and tour the entire world.

Krishna had many fantasies in earlier days. He wanted to become a train engineer so he could see many towns. He enjoyed a number of classical stage dramas. He particularly observed the spectators who applauded when the climax scene was being enacted. He wished to become a great actor and receive overwhelming applause from the audience. He had reminiscences of many such fantasies from his early childhood. But now, his aspirations were altogether different. His sole aim was liberation; ‘Knowing the Self,’ was his only goal.

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9. *Kaumara Nadi* Reading

Pantulu was always eager to know Krishna's future. There are different traditional ways of knowing it. Pantulu had complete faith in *nadi* astrology. One day he and his grandson went to a *Kaumara Nadi* astrologer whom he had consulted earlier. The astrologer lived in Royapet, Madras.

The astrologer received them cordially and, looking at Krishna, asked, 'Is he your grandson, sir?' Pantulu replied, 'Yes, he is my daughter's son. I brought him to you to learn about his future,' so saying, Pantulu submitted Krishna's horoscope to him.

The astrologer said, 'Good, please wait,' and went in, with the horoscope in hand, to search for the matching palm leaf manuscript from the archives he had inside the house.

The word "*nadi*" supposedly means "search". These *nadi* manuscripts were written on palm leaves in old Tamil. Some were also written in Sanskrit.

There are different *Nadi* astrologies: *Kaumara Nadi*, *Parasara Nadi*, *Dhruva Nadi*. *Bhrugu Nadi*, *Sukra Nadi*, *Chandrakala Nadi* and *Bhujanga Nadi* are the important ones. There is a legend which says that some yogis had contributed to these *nadis* centuries ago.

According to another legend, Lord Shiva incarnated Himself as Bhrugu Maharshi. The Maharshi meditated earnestly for a long time and attained higher levels of knowledge and various powers. He was sympathetic to human beings and their welfare. He prepared horoscopes of important persons and future prophets on palm leaves.

Pantulu consulted the *Bhrugu Samhita*, also known as *Kaumara Nadi*. The astrologer was believed to have inherited the original ancient manuscripts from his ancestors. Pantulu believed that the readings of this *Nadi* were accurate.

After an hour, the astrologer emerged with a manuscript. He was sweating profusely. He wrote down the whole horoscope of Krishna in Tamil as it was written in the palm leaves of the manuscript. Later, he himself translated it from Tamil into English and read it out to Pantulu before handing it over to him.

Pantulu compensated the astrologer generously and bade him goodbye. Krishna and Pantulu walked up to a typing office in Royapet. The astrologers' reading was typed neatly and Krishna observed how the machine was typing the text. The typist was not looking at the keyboard while typing the text fast. Krishna watched how his fingers moved on the entire keyboard. He was impressed by the skill of the typist. Both he and his grandfather then returned to Adyar.

On return from Royapet, Pantulu become thoughtful and silent. He looked at Krishna silently for a few moments and spoke to him softly, 'Kittu, it is said that if you study well you will become a famous and great man. So concentrate all your attention on your education. You must work hard, you understand?'

Krishna expected something more from his grandfather. Did that Tamil astrologer babble only this kind of nonsense for so many hours? Krishna suspected that his grandfather was hiding something from him. He silently left the room and walked into the verandah. A number of children were at play there and he watched their play attentively for some time.

Pantulu recalled his daughter's last words. She emphatically told him on the death bed the same thing that was mentioned in the astrological prediction. Each matched the other exactly. Her prophesy was not an imaginary wish. It was now clear that her words were destined to take shape as reality in future.

***Kaumara Nadi* Reading:**

Vasishta and Viswamitra offer obeisance to Goddess Parvati and discuss the tenth *bhava* of the native.

The native's name is Gopala Krishnamurti. Sitaramayya is the name of his father. And his mother's name is Bharati. The planetary position at the time of his birth was as follows: Mithuna *Lagnam*, Sun and Jupiter in the ascendant, Mercury, Moon and Saturn in the second house, Mars in the fourth house, Rahu in the sixth house, and Venus and Ketu in the twelfth house.

At this stage, Vasishta says that the native will attain *moksha* in this very life.

Educational attainments must be very high. He is endowed with versatility, imagination, intuitive perception and fluency of speech. He must attain prosperity through personal merit; but there is no steady income and it will not be proportionate to his name and fame. He will have much more money than his ancestral inheritance. Since he is distinctly spiritual-minded, he will always be indifferent to money.

He comes into contact with great men very early in life. Breaks in education; begins professional study in his twenty-third year, but ends it abruptly.

After the twenty-fifth year, he takes up the line of teaching and lecturing for an organization which stands for universal brotherhood and essential unity of all religions. That brings him wisdom, friendship with great men, increased reputation as a great speaker and respect of learned men. The nature of his work is such that he constantly travels, comes into contact with great men from different fields and gains experience.

After his thirty-fifth year, there is a change in his life. Residence in foreign lands. There is an indication of constant and fruitless traveling around the world. Intense inward struggle. But the inner crisis will end well. He will be helped by a great teacher who puts him on the right path. He will be aided by a woman who will help him establish himself in foreign lands permanently.

Forty-fifth to fifty-fifth year is a period of great importance in his life. He will be born again in his forty-ninth year. Becomes an international personality. He will be constantly on the move. His name goes to the four corners of the world. Honors will be showered upon him. Books will be written about him. Great respect for him in all lands. As years go by, a great organization with huge properties and a great following will grow around him to spread his teaching.

Around his fifty-fifth year, there is an indication of death under tragic circumstances, failing which he lives right up to a ripe old age preaching all the richness of his personal experience. He will leave his mark on the world as one of the great teachers of mankind.

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As Krishna was arriving at the age when he could comprehend things and happenings around him, his grandfather's daily routine, behavior and style attracted his attention. For him, Pantulu was a hero. He molded himself after him carefully. In his young mind the emotional bond with his grandfather had already formed. Krishna's investment in strengthening this bond was so great that even the slightest disruption in it would have been intolerable.

The Theosophical Society had been providing food to all its members in specified rows. One was marked for traditional and orthodox Brahmins. The other rows were meant for others. On that day, Krishna had a new idea. He caught hold of his grandfather's hand and pulled him towards the second row of diners; he sat near a plate and asked his grandfather to sit next to him. Everyone in the row felt happy when Pantulu joined them. Pantulu felt uncomfortable but restrained himself and finished his meal.

Both the grandfather and grandson walked to their residence in silence. Pantulu was fretting and fuming at heart. Immediately after arriving, he exploded at his grandson: 'You forced me to eat sitting by the side of beef-eating barbarians. You ruined our tradition and family prestige. Today, I have become a sinner. The prescribed cleansing ritual alone will atone for my sin.'

Krishna was shocked at this vehement reaction of his grandfather. He did not anticipate it.

Sometime ago, Krishna observed how his grandfather had donated some money to Guduri Ramachandra who had been working hard to eradicate untouchability and uplift scheduled caste people in the society. His grandfather promised the social worker all his cooperation in future as well. Was it the same grandfather who shouted at him today? Something is wrong, somewhere. There are inconsistencies – great ideals on one side and traditions which could not be questioned or violated, on the other. How could these be reconciled?

For the last few years, his grandfather had been his ideal to follow. Now, Krishna felt disappointed and hurt. He was in deep agony over his blatant hypocrisy.

The pair returned to Gudiwada. Pantulu entered the house by the backdoor. He ordered a servant to get a dishful of clay immediately. He added some water to it and applied it to his body. He looked like a clay man. Hot water was made ready for his bath. He used coconut coir and not soap to scrub and clean himself. Standing in the sun he dried himself off with a towel. Then he entered his prayer room wearing fresh dry clothes.

Durgamma bathed Krishna thoroughly and mildly rebuked him, 'See what you have done! Your grandfather's lineage has been pure as fire. No one has ever done anything to violate Brahminism in this house so far.'

Krishna did not feel guilty for what he had done. In fact, his grandfather's honesty and philosophy were put to acid test, which shattered the hero image of his grandfather. He asked himself again and again, why this rank hypocrisy?

After an hour, Pantulu came out of his prayer room. He kept the papers given by the Kaumara Nadi astrologer in the iron safe carefully. Later, when his wife was alone, he informed her of the reading. Such personal matters were always kept confidential.

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Krishna still remembered the Golden Jubilee Celebrations in Adyar. Particularly, the magnificent speech of Annie Besant under the banyan tree, continued to be fresh in his mind. He wished to address a gathering on the same lines as Besant. Then, how and where could he do it? How to get an audience? Suddenly he had an idea.

One afternoon, when everyone was having a siesta, Krishna dressed himself like his grandfather and combed his hair. He put on his sandals and slipped out of the house. He called some street urchins and said to them, 'If you just stand before me for a few minutes, I will give you each five coins.' They did not believe him. They thought that it was probably some sort of prank. Some thought that it was a fancy dress party and wanted to know more.

At a short distance from his house, there was a mound. He stood upon it and asked all the boys to stand before him. He coughed a little, cleared his throat like a public speaker and started to address them. He did not know what he was saying. His speech consisted of a number of Telugu words as well as some English gobbledygook. There was no coherence in the sentences. It was plain gibberish.

Krishna tried to imitate Annie Besant in gestures and facial expressions. Nobody could make head or tail out of his lecture for all the ten minutes he spoke. Then he asked them to applaud in appreciation of his speech. Everyone clapped. He humbly bowed to all of them and stepped down the "dais". Then Krishna took out the small coins from his pocket and distributed them to his listeners as promised. They all left the place smiling.

Whether he was willing or not, Krishna had to go back to the same school in Gudiwada. Krishna had a lot of freedom there. There was no such freedom in the

Guindy National School. There were many restrictions, all in the name of discipline. For instance, whether sleepy or not, every student should go to bed at 9:00 pm sharp. Krishna preferred to be free like a bird.

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Krishna continued to be indifferent to school education. Pantulu tried his best to persuade him to pay attention to school work. Krishna always paid a deaf ear to his admonitions. Pantulu arranged for special coaching for him in the evenings. Krishna was sent to a tutor everyday in the evening, after dinner. A servant boy of about twelve years of age would accompany Krishna with a bright hurricane lantern in hand. There was a touring cinema hall on their way. Krishna and the servant boy listened to the songs and dialogues in the movies on their way to and from the tutor's place. Krishna was tempted to watch a movie one day. He decided to play truant to the tutoring session. He warned the servant boy not to tell at home. He also bought candy at the theater before the show. They both watched the film show and returned home.

One day, the two boys entered the theatre after the show had already begun and slowly moved to a couple of vacant chairs and sat in them. After about 15 minutes, the show was suspended and lights were turned on to allow change of a film reel. Then, in that light, to his surprise, Krishna found that he was sitting in the seat next to his grandfather. Pantulu noticed the boy and was angry; but he restrained himself.

After returning home, Pantulu reprimanded the servant boy in Krishna's presence. He appealed to Krishna not to abscond from the tutoring sessions and neglect his school work.

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After returning from Adyar, Krishna's desire to learn English became stronger. He started to read regularly the English periodicals his grandfather subscribed to, whether he understood them or not.

He purchased the Sankaranarayana's Dictionary to find the Telugu equivalents of difficult English words. His vocabulary thus improved gradually. The popular J.V. Ramanaiah's *English and Telugu Grammar* and Wren and Martin's *English Grammar* helped him learn the language. As a result, he could score 80% in English tests. His grip on the language grew gradually stronger and his confidence rose.

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A few days before, when he went to Adyar, Krishna realized that the mind had tremendous will power. By utilizing that power he had been satisfying his petty desires. This ability strengthened his independence and increased his self-confidence. Krishna observed keenly that his desires needed some time to materialize. He didn't understand why things had to take time. His will power was revealing itself on various occasions. About half of his desires were being fulfilled. Did his wishing an event to take place just before it happened cause it to happen or was the happening a mere a coincidence?

School was nothing but jail for Krishna. So, he would often try to find ways and means of absconding from it. One day, he strongly wished not to go to school. But how? What reason or excuse could he offer at home? He thought over it again and again. 'Ah, unless it rains they won't cancel the school; therefore, it should rain today. So it will rain today. Definitely it will; yes, it will.' So thinking and wishing for a rainfall again and again he was walking toward the school. 'Yes, it's getting ready. Any moment it will begin to rain now, any moment....' And miraculously the sky became cloudy and it rained heavily. The school was closed, to the utter delight of Krishna.

On another day, he wished to stay away from school; but how? Someone should direct him not to go to school. 'Some order should come to me; somebody should ask me not to go to school. Yes, the order should come. It is about to come now... right now... any moment now.' His desire was strong. It did not leave his mind. Within a few minutes, Durgamma called him and said, 'Ramudu, don't go to school today. A feast is scheduled in the afternoon. A number of guests are expected to arrive from the neighboring villages. I need your help and I will talk to your grandfather about it. Meanwhile you attend to the immediate needs.' Krishna felt quite happy.

One day, when he went to school, his friends informed him that except for the last hour, they had no work for the rest of the day. Krishna smiled and replied, 'Very simple. That teacher won't come to school.' His friends didn't believe what he said. 'How could it be?' they asked. He assured them, 'No, the teacher won't come. How can he come to school if he is down with a fever?' 'How do you know that?' they asked again.

He did not like that teacher. A few days earlier, Krishna spelled the word "February" incorrectly. The teacher punished him for it and made him write the word correctly twenty times on sand. He was the first person to hit Krishna. So he should be the first one to have fever, none else. 'My words won't go in vain. By this time the teacher might already have fever. How can he come to school?' Krishna repeated his prophesy.

Within a few minutes, the school message boy came to the class and announced, 'Students, your last-period teacher has a fever and he applied for leave. You can go home now.' Krishna's friends and classmates wondered how Krishna could have known.

A relative of Pantulu used to come to Gudiwada from Machilipatnam occasionally. Whenever he came, he brought sweet snacks from Machilipatnam with him. The sweets were very popular. Children used to call him "Sweetmeat Uncle". One day, while returning from school, Krishna thought of eating special sweets. 'How I wish that the Sweetmeat Uncle may visit us with his wonderful sweets! He might have already come.' So thinking, Krishna stepped into the house to find the Sweetmeat Uncle.

One day, Pantulu asked Krishna to convey a message to a gentleman by name Venkata Rao, 'Kittu, his residence is on your way to the school. Ask him to come and see me right away.' On his way to the school Krishna met some of his friends and forgot his grandfather's errand. He returned home in the afternoon for lunch and suddenly

remembered it. Pantulu asked him, 'Did you pass on my message to Venkata Rao? The fellow has not turned up yet.' 'I went for him. He is out of town,' bluffed Krishna. Next day, early in the morning, Venkata Rao came to meet Pantulu and informed him that he had gone to Guntur the previous day.

One day, while at school, Krishna all of a sudden wanted to go home. He did not know why he had such a desire then. He slowly approached his teacher and said, 'Sir, my grandmother has fallen ill at home suddenly. I received a message just now.' So saying, he took leave of the teacher and went home. To his great surprise, his grandmother was really sick at home. She asked him to go to the doctor and get her some medicine, as there was no one else to attend to her at that time.

Durgamma's proposed journey to Machilipatnam was postponed several times. On that day, she was determined to visit her daughter Saraswati. She asked her husband to make the necessary arrangements for the trip. And she got busy preparing sweets and savories to take with her. Krishna came back from school. He could smell the ghee from the kitchen.

Krishna asked her, 'Where you are going? Why did you prepare snacks?'

'Today I am going to Machilipatnam to see your aunt. It is a long-pending trip,' replied Durgamma.

Krishna said immediately, 'Why are *you* going? Aunt will be coming here soon.'

'How do you know?' she questioned.

'That I do not know. But her arrival is certain. Wait and see,' he said confidently.

After a few minutes, Pantulu came running, 'Let us start soon. There is little time left.' So saying, he went in to change his clothes.

All of sudden a horse-drawn carriage stopped in front of the house. To Durgamma surprise, her daughter Saraswati stepped down from the cart, along with her son Narasimha Rao.

'How come you are here? We are about to leave for your place!' exclaimed Durgamma in disbelief.

'We waited for your early arrival. You did not turn up. I thought maybe you were busy with your household chores. So we came here instead,' said Saraswati casually.

'Did you inform anyone about your journey beforehand?' Durgamma asked in a tone of surprise and disbelief.

'No, we decided on the spur of the moment. Why you do you look so surprised?' she quizzed.

Durgamma was stunned. 'How could Ramudu foretell your arrival? How is that possible?' she wondered.

At the nearby school an old woman sat by the side of the street and sold homemade sweetmeats everyday. Occasionally Krishna would buy a few snacks from her for his friends. In course of time, the old woman noticed a dramatic change in her business. Whenever Krishna made purchases, she would sell the remainder of the stuff in no time. She thought, 'the boy must be my lucky mascot.' She waited everyday for Krishna's first 'lucky' purchase.

One day, she offered more sweets for his single coin and asked happily not to pay her any more. Surprised, Krishna asked her, 'Why?' She smiled broadly and said, 'My little boy, your hand is very lucky for me. Once you make a purchase, that's all, the rest of my stuff would be sold off in a short time. So I am giving away these extra sweets to you for my pleasure,' said the old woman making a gesture of appreciation. 'No,' Krishna said, 'I would not take anything gratis.' He paid the balance he owed her and left.

One day, Krishna and his friend Raghava Rao went to a shop to buy something. The shop was crowded. Krishna was in the habit of paying for purchases in advance; so he gave the shopkeeper a rupee coin. The owner instantly took the coin and put it in his box. Krishna waited for his turn. After a while, to Krishna's astonishment, the shop owner demanded money for the purchase, forgetting that he had already taken a rupee.

Raghava Rao argued that the money had been paid. But the shopkeeper refused to admit it. Some heated words were exchanged. Krishna stood silently without interfering. He again handed over another coin without hesitation and bought the article, to the utter surprise of his friend.

'Why did you not question him? Why did you tamely give in to his offense?' argued Raghava Rao. Krishna said coolly, 'If I lost one rupee today, tomorrow that fellow would lose more heavily.'

'How is that?' his friend asked. Krishna did not reply. After a few days Raghava Rao came to know that the shop owner met with an accident and was hospitalized.

Krishna was thus getting all his wishes fulfilled by virtue of his own will and confidence. The worship in the temples, the vows to the gods and other related procedures became completely dispensable. He would say, 'When I have the ability to achieve what I want with my own will power, does not depending on idols belittle my own powers? Why should I underestimate my Himalayan self-confidence? There are no powers at all in the idols. My own planetary power is enough for me!'

Since then Krishna did not go to any temple. Different gods in temples, including his favorite, Karanji Anjaneya Swami of Bangalore, faded away in his mind. At the tender age of seven years, Krishna developed an immense dislike for God. He turned his back on God, saying, 'God is totally routed out from my consciousness.'

This is the first of the different transformations each of which occurred in his life at the end of a cycle of seven years.

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That day, Krishna went to school as usual. Many of the students were not present. He asked his friend, 'Where did they all go?' 'Our classmate's mother has died. They might all have gone there,' he replied. Immediately Krishna looked for the classmate's house and went there. He heard heart-rending sounds of mourning coming from the house. Krishna went in and found his friend sitting in a corner crying for his mother. Some relatives were consoling him. In the central room, the dead body was lying on a palm-leaf mat. Near the head of the corpse was a lit oil lamp. All the relatives and friends of the family were present.

'What is meant by death? What happens to a person after death? Where does he go? Are there heaven and hell really?' Krishna wondered.

Generally children are afraid to go the cremation ground. It is said that ghosts frequent the place and possess children; that is why grownups forbid children to go there. But Krishna followed the corpse to the burial ground without fear. He observed the funeral rites and the cremation of the body. He was not disturbed in the least; he thought that all that was natural. Except for his inquisitiveness to know about the procedure of the cremation, Krishna did not feel anything.

Someone informed Durgamma that Krishna made a trip to the cremation ground. She was upset. When Krishna returned home she questioned him: 'Why have you gone to the cremation ground?' 'Why not? I wanted to go and I did. So what?' he retorted. 'Children must not go there. They get terrified and later they get a fever....' Krishna cut short her remarks, 'No, I am not at all afraid. And I am all right; no fever, nothing.' She instructed him, 'Remove your clothes. Take a bath. Keep those polluted clothes under the pomegranate tree over there. Get into the house after the bath.' Krishna did not know why he had to take a bath on returning from the burial ground. He complied, nonetheless.

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On that day, Krishna came home early from school as he was tired. He went to the bathroom, washed himself and strait away went into his room. Then he changed his clothes and slept in a fetus position like a baby. After a while Durgamma stepped into his room to collect the soiled cloths. She picked them up and was about to leave the room when her eyes turned toward the window. She was shocked to see a snake coiled on the window grill like a hanging garland. The window was about five to six feet from Krishna's bed. Petrified, Durgamma, without making any noise, gathered all her strength and dragged the bed toward the door. Krishna opened his eyes and shouted at her, 'Why you are dragging my bed?' He then got off the bed. Durgamma silently pointed at the window. By this time the snake started to unwind and move out. Then it slithered out slowly by scaling the nearby retaining wall. Strangely Krishna was not afraid of it. He was his calm and watched the snake with interest.

A snake charmer was called in. He scanned the vicinity thoroughly trying to find the snake in vain.

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Pantulu completed sixty years of age that year. As per tradition, a large scale function was planned for that event (*shasti purti*). Relatives from different places arrived. The *Nadi* reading predicted that Pantulu would pass away that year. Pantulu did not forget the prediction. Yet he was cheerful and kept himself busy. An important item of the celebrations was the remarriage of Pantulu and Durgamma. Durgamma, however, was depressed. She knew of the prediction. If it proved to be true, then who would look after Krishna? Jagannadham might take up the responsibility for the time being, but in course of time he might neglect him. Not everyone could manage the recalcitrant boy. Pantulu could give large amounts of money to someone to take care of him. But who could give him the affection he needs? Pantulu, for his part, was skeptical of the prediction because he felt quite hale and healthy.

He sent word to his grandson to come to his room. Within a moment, Krishna rushed to his grandfather's room, gasping for breath.

'Kitty, sit still for a little while. I have to inform you of an important matter,' said Pantulu. He looked at his grandson anxiously and asked him, 'Can you live without me?' Krishna replied, 'Of course, But where will you go? Why? Even if you go, you will come back, won't you?' Pantulu had to speak out the truth, 'The *Nadi* predicted that my life would be coming to an end shortly. So...' 'Oh! That man, we saw him in Madras. You mean that man?' asked Krishna. 'Yes, the same person. His reading predicted that I may die this year. I am worried about your future when I am not around,' said Pantulu watching his grandson's reaction.

Krishna coolly and indifferently listened to him and asked, 'That's all right. What arrangements have you done for me? First tell me of those details.'

Pantulu was shocked at the response of his grandson; he expected that he would be upset by the prediction. Pantulu also noticed that the boy was taking the news in stride and treating it as a casual affair. It was interesting that it was the same boy who was so attached to him not so long ago. How he had grown! Pantulu felt a great sense of relief and answered, 'Kittu, yes. You will be well taken care of. I have written my will carefully. According to it, you can live happily.' But he did not reveal the details of his will.

'You mean I need not be afraid because you have taken all necessary precautions. But I can live somehow or other. But grandpa, how will you die so suddenly? No, you won't. That *Nadi* prediction may be wrong,' replied Krishna indifferently.

Nadi astrology was considered most reliable. But in Pantulu's case it failed.

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In 1926, while touring the Andhra province, Krishnaji visited Bezawada. He stayed with Rajagopalachari Iyengar. It was announced that his talks were scheduled at the Museum Hall, on Bandar Road. The local theosophists, Hindu scholars and others attended the meetings. Pantulu also was present, along with his grandson.

Krishnaji hailed from the Andhra area. He wore a lace-bordered *dhoti*, a *lalchi* and a gold-laced upper cloth. With his beaming face, his powerful looks and facial expression, he held an extraordinary attraction.

Krishna could only understand parts of Krishnaji's speech in English. He wanted to see him again. He noticed that everyone regarded Krishnaji as some sort of heavenly being, the chosen one. He asked his grandfather why Krishnaji gave his speech totally in English, and why, although he was Telugu, he didn't speak to anyone in Telugu. Pantulu replied that English was the royal language and language of the government; and that if he wanted to speak to Krishnaji, he should learn English well at school.

Krishna asked again, 'Where was Krishnaji educated?'

'In London.'

'Who were his teachers?'

'Englishmen, white people.'

'There you are! If he too had studied at Gudiwada School would he have become so great? No, Grandpa! Send me to London for education.'

Pantulu smiled at him and said, 'you little brat, you want to go to London for education? First, study well and sincerely here. Then you can go to London.'

'I should learn English well, to be able to speak to great people. I need to acquire a command of the language. Then, for higher education, I must go to London,' Krishna resolved while walking out of the lecture hall.

Krishna paid more attention to learning English. Whenever he could, he would read an English book. He started reading English newspapers aloud and tried to improve his pronunciation. Whenever he came across anything interesting in any paper, he would save a clipping of it to read it again later and understand it. In a short time, he could grasp different idioms in the language. He developed a little ease in expressing himself. Though there was no one before him, he would speak aloud as if he was addressing a gathering.

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Pantulu was a principled person. He was time conscious and followed a schedule in all activities of his day-to-day life. For example, lunch was scheduled at 12 noon.

Krishna did not like such a rigid way of living. He might be ravenous, yet he could not

have food till noon. So he thought of a clever solution. With the help of a stool, he would reach the clock on the wall and advance its minute hand to his convenience. He could thus get his food whenever he felt hungry.

This trick did not work for very long. One day, as usual, Krishna adjusted the clock and waited for it to ring. He did not know that a few minutes earlier Pantulu set the clock back to the correct time. This happened when the clock started to chime at the wrong time. Pantulu was perplexed and opened the cupboard to compare the time of the wall clock with the time of his own watch. His watch was reading 11.30 am. For a moment Pantulu did not understand where the problem was. Thus, he caught Krishna red-handed when he was trying to reset the clock.

Krishna was very inquisitive and wanted to learn the "why and how" of everything. The wall clock had been attracting his attention for some time. One day, when his grandfather was out, he removed the clock from the wall and carried it to his room, bolting the door behind him. Then with the help of a screw driver he dismantled the clock totally and examined carefully each part of the clock. He was confident that he could reassemble the clock. He did and hung it back on the wall within a few minutes. It appeared perfectly all right except that it did not work. He swung the pendulum a few times; he tapped the clock here and there. But none of that made any difference. He did not know what to do. He left the clock on the wall.

In the evening, Durgamma complained to Pantulu that Krishna had meddled with the wall clock. 'A perfect clock has become useless in a few minutes,' remarked Pantulu and sent for a mechanic. The mechanic carefully checked the clock and made it to work in just a minute. He observed, 'Sir, I don't know who meddled with it. It was reassembled in a perfectly orderly manner, as if it was handled by a skilled mechanic, except for a small mistake with the key-winding mechanism. That's all.'

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10. Confrontations with Grandfather

One day, when Pantulu was in his prayer room on the second floor, a child began to cry continuously on the first floor. The mother could not control her. Everyone was upset. Pantulu rushed out of his prayer room furiously and slashed at the child in the mother's arms ruthlessly. He shouted, 'This is a hell of a house! All the riff-raff gather here and ruin my meditation. How awful!' and rushed out like a whirlwind.

The infant's body was immediately inflamed and the baby writhed in pain. It was a shocking sight for Krishna who watched it in silence; never he had seen his grandfather like that before nor did he believe that he could act so inhumanely. A shudder ripped through him. He felt as though *he* was beaten. He could not keep watching the misery of the crying child.

Krishna questioned, 'Is this the same grandfather whom I considered as an embodiment of high values? Is this the same person renowned as a great meditator? It is said that meditation ushers a peaceful mind. Is this that peace? By meditation complete control of mind is supposed to be attained. But complete control is lost by meditation!'

All of a sudden Krishna began to despise his grandfather. To his mind, Pantulu had descended to the level of a hunter and a butcher.

Krishna took the incident to heart and become deeply disturbed. His questioning played an important role in his quest for truth in the future. It was going to be the foundation for his search.

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Krishna was known for his lavishness among his circles. He did not care about money. He never knew what frugality meant. If he was not given as much money as he demanded, there would be much shouting until his demand was met. He was obstinate by nature. If his wish was not satisfied, his grandmother would be the target of his attack. She would think, 'Next time, I will not give him a penny.' But if he asked for money again, she would readily give; she did not know why.

The money his grandfather had given him for school fees and other needs he remitted in the school as fees for poor students. He also provided them with books and other stationery. One day, Pantulu questioned the propriety of his expenditure, 'The value of money can only be realized by working hard for it. I am struggling hard to earn money and you are spending it away. There should be some limit and control on your spending, you understand?'

Krishna felt unhappy at his grandfather's remarks. Angrily he replied, 'Am I spending your money? What are doing with the income from my mother's property? You may treat my expenditure as part of my mother's money.'

Pantulu was shocked at this reply. 'You have the cheek to ask me for an account of your mother's money? You don't have heaps of your mother's money to spend on anyone and everyone in town, Mr. Krishnamurti!' Pantulu pungently retorted, looking at his grandson with apparent anger.

Pantulu wanted to control the spending of Krishna. He kept his money in a cupboard under lock and key. He was, however, giving him money for his daily expenses. But, for Krishna, it was not enough. He opened his grandfather's cupboard with the help of some other key. He became a master at opening his grandfather's cupboard whenever he liked, to take as much money as he wanted.

Pantulu discovered that money was missing from his cupboard. How did the money disappear? One day, Pantulu caught Krishna opening the cupboard. He questioned him and said, 'Taking money like this without permission is theft. And theft is a crime; do you know that?'

Krishna replied calmly, 'If you give me as much as I need, why do I need to resort to theft? I had no alternative!'

'Wonderful! Just because I did not pay for your lavish spending, you have committed theft and are even justifying it! There have been no criminals in my family. I can't understand where you picked up this habit,' Pantulu remarked

Krishna did not pay any heed to his grandfather's remarks. Pantulu became thoroughly annoyed of him and gave him the keys, sarcastically saying, 'You take the keys and spend money as you like. Will you kindly at least make a note of the amount you take on a paper and keep the paper in the cupboard? If the cash balance does not tally, who knows how much the clerk may be embezzling?' Krishna took the keys from his grandfather with no hesitation.

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In 1916, the construction of the building for the Theosophical Society Center in Gudiwada was completed. Pantulu named it 'Krishna Nivas' and handed it over to the Society. In the rear of the building there were some rooms which were rented out as shops such as a shoe store and a bookstore. The rent was used for the maintenance of the building. Pantulu's clerk collected the rents. Sometimes, the renters paid only half the rent that was due, explaining that the other half was taken by Krishna. Pantulu got angry; he didn't understand what his grandson did with all that money.

One day, Pantulu obtained Krishna's accounts from the bookstore. Three copies of a dictionary were purchased! Any sensible student would only buy one copy. Pantulu asked Krishna why he had bought three copies. Krishna calmly replied, 'One for me and the other two for my friends.'

'Oh, then, you can as well provide dictionaries for the entire class. What do *you* have to lose?'

'I have no objection'.

Pantulu was unable to figure out how to bring Krishna round. Next month, it was the shoe store's turn to send him a bill for four pairs of shoes. Pantulu directed his clerk to forbid the shopkeepers to give Krishna anything, either in cash or in kind.

Subsequently, there was a shortage in the rent that was due. Pantulu asked the clerk for an explanation. The clerk submitted, 'Sir, as directed by you, I asked shopkeepers not to pay Krishna any part of the rent. And it seems that when they refused to give him the money, he had threatened them.' He added, 'They are afraid to turn down his demand.'

For a minute Pantulu was silent. He said, 'Let him come home. I shall thrash out the issue today.' Durgamma expressed her helplessness. 'Oh my God, how to control him? If I advise him, he frowns at me and threatens to leave the house once and for all. I am helpless!'

A little while later Krishna came home and was in a good mood. At first, his grandparents kept quiet on seeing him. A little while later, pretending to be angry with him, Pantulu said, 'We have been fulfilling your childish desires as per your wishes. Still, your spending has been skyrocketing. There should be a limit. You have even gone to the extent of threatening the renters.'

***

In the month of Aswin every year, the Dasara holidays are celebrated. When Bharati was alive the festival was organized on a grand scale. For nine days, the Court of Dolls was arranged in a glorious manner. All the dolls that had been collected from her childhood had a place in the court. Most of them were idols of Sri Krishna, in different colors and sizes. A pitcher and an idol of the Goddess were placed at the center of the court. A large idol of Sri Krishna was also at the center. Friends and neighbors were invited for a reception and were given fruits, turmeric and vermilion, betel leaves and betel nut. With the death of Bharati the celebration was discontinued.

One year, during the Dasara holidays, a new idea flashed in Krishna's young mind. He got hold of the keys of the iron safe of his grandfather and opened it. In it there were small pouches containing gold coins. He took them and came out into the street. He called some poor children on the street by waving at them. They promptly assembled in front of him. He distributed the gold coins one after another. Their eyes protruded in disbelief. Were they dreaming? Was it a hallucination? No, they were real gold coins glittering in the sunshine. They thanked him, bowed their heads and walked away as fast as they could.

Durgamma learned about this and was petrified to the roots of her being. She was also worried about how her husband would react. Pantulu too came to know of the incident. He was aghast. It was an investment carefully accumulated over a period of time. In a jiffy it was all gone. Pantulu was maddened by the very thought of what had happened. He slowly gained his composure and said in a quite voice devoid of anger,

'Kittu! Are you sober or have you lost your balance of mind utterly? Are you aware of what you are doing? When you were spending lavishly, we reconciled ourselves to the fact by thinking that you were childish and innocent. But today like a simpleton or a stupid who doesn't know the value of gold, you committed theft and distributed the coins to all the passersby. Are they pebbles on the seashore to give away as you please?'

Pantulu added, 'For whom have I been struggling to earn all this money? It is for you and you alone, and for your future happiness. The gold was intended for you, to lay golden roads for you. Only when you earn and save money can you understand my agony at what you have done today. We lave been singing and dancing to your tunes to keep you happy. We pampered you and learned a bitter lesson.'

Krishna remained silent and indifferent. Pantulu got irritated and said, 'There is sense in almsgiving in a modest way. But you stole the gold coins and gave them away as alms.' He paused. As though he had just returned from some other realm, Krishna slowly opened his mouth and replied, 'You don't give if I ask for them. So I stole them. I don't know why I wanted to distribute them to poor children. I just gave them away. That's all.'

The whole scene disturbed Durgamma. She recalled a similar response from her daughter, Bharati, who, once on a Sankranti day, gave away a silk sari to a street mendicant with a trained bull.

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Pantulu grew legumes and rice in the fields around Gudiwada. The land was leased to farmers. There was a written agreement as to how much each farmer had to pay him per year; Pantulu did not trust that the lessee would abide by an oral agreement. The farmers were not rich and they lived by hard work. One day, a farmer by name Bhushayya, who had rented land from him, visited him.

Pantulu was sitting in an easy chair in a relaxed mood. Bhushayya bowed to him in his usual humble fashion and said, 'Sir, I have come to submit that this year the yield of the crops has been low. Pests have ruined the crop. I haven't realized even a fourth of the normal yield. I am not in a position to pay the lease amount. Please be merciful.' After a pause, Pantulu replied, 'So the yield is less; there were pests. But is that my fault? Sorry, but what can I do? There is no place for kindness here. As per the agreement, the full amount should be remitted.' Bhushayya pleaded, 'Sorry sir, this year we have not even recovered our investment. I can't pay you more that 25 *paise* per each rupee I owe you. If I pay more, we have to starve for food or sell away our house, leaving us without shelter. Kindly come to our rescue.'

Pantulu nodded his head. 'Bhushayya, when the yields were higher before, I never asked you for even a rupee more than the lease amount. You paid just what was stipulated in the lease.'

Bhushayya again submitted, 'Sir, you are a righteous person. All these years, we have been living at your mercy and support. I even had to perform my daughter's marriage.

This year I have been very unfortunate. Please be merciful and show me a way out of this hardship.'

'How is it possible, Bhushayya? You know if the agreement is violated, it is a crime,' responded Pantulu, making a legal point.

His renter was afraid of him. He knew that, in the case of another renter, Pantulu had dragged the person to court and seized his properties for defaulting on the lease money.

After a little while, Pantulu replied, 'That is your bad luck. With sympathy for you, I will give you a little consideration at the time of payment. But I don't agree to receive a mere 25 *paise* per rupee. Even if I do, the law will not agree. All of us should abide by the law. So you find your own way out.' Pantulu thus even insinuated a threat by invoking the law.

It was not known how much Bhushayya finally offered to pay or how much consideration Pantulu had in fact given him.

In the next room, Krishna was reading a devotional book and couldn't help overhearing the conversation between his grandfather and Bhushayya. Through the window, he watched Bhushayya too. Krishna was overcome with anguish and sadness. He watched Bhushayya leaving the house slowly, with his head down. Krishna did not understand why his grandfather had to be so unkind. Why was he not more sympathetic towards Bhushayya? Why this inhuman over-lordship?

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Krishna recalled another incident, quite different from this, which took place earlier, of a destitute old woman who came to their house begging for shelter.

In one of the streets on the Eastern side of Gudiwada, there lived a Brahmin priest with his wife and three children. The family immigrated from Bezawada a long time ago and settled there. After some time, the priest died and his sons began to live separately with their families. For sometime they looked after their mother taking turns, but in course of time the daughters-in-law began to dislike her and finally she was asked to leave. The old woman began to roam around Gudiwada living at the mercy of people.

A Muslim *Saheb* recognized her and recalled her earlier happier days. He pitied her and provided shelter for her in his house. He knew about the traditional lifestyle she was used to and so arranged for her to live independently, preparing her own food. After some time, the gentleman moved to Guntur and he took her to her sons to leave her with them.

Her sons did not accept her, declaring her an outcaste, as she had lived under the roof of a Muslim. The *Saheb* went with her from door to door looking for help. No Brahmin family stepped forward to give shelter to this 90 year-old woman. Suddenly, she remembered Tummalapalli Pantulu and asked the *Saheb* to take her to him, hoping she might get shelter there.

With the help of a walking stick, the old woman came to Pantulu's house carrying a little bundle of clothes under her arm. She sat on the patio and sent someone in for Pantulu. In a few minutes, Pantulu came out but did not recognize her.

With half-opened eyes, the old woman looked at him and said, 'can't your recognize me? I am Kamakshi, wife of the priest in Bezawada. We all used to live in the same area. Your first wife was raised in our house. This is my present plight. After the priest passed away, no one wanted me. I am a destitute.'

Pantulu recognized her and asked, 'Why have you come here like this? What happened to your sons? You look miserable.'

'It's all my bad luck. I am not wanted even by my own children. Under the influence of my daughters-in-law, my sons have cast me out. For sometime, God came to my rescue in the form of this Muslim *Saheb*. Now he is moving away. I went from door to door and I was turned out everywhere. By God's grace, I remembered you. Will you accept this old woman to live here, eating left-over food in your house? I shall spend my time in a corner of a room,' pleaded the lady.

Pantulu recalled the old glory of the woman. He asked the Muslim *Saheb* to leave her with him. He reassured the old lady: 'So many others live and eat with us anyway. You won't be a burden on us.' After six months, she passed away quietly, while asleep. Pantulu sent word for her sons and her funeral was performed under his supervision.

On that day, Pantulu received the old woman so kindly and came to her rescue. But today, the same grandfather sent Bhushayya away cruelly, paying a deaf ear to his pleas. Why did he act like this? Krishna could not understand.

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A few days later, a person came for Pantulu. Pantulu was out of station. He told the clerk that he came to clear a debt. Some time ago, he had borrowed 500 rupees. For some time later, his whereabouts were not known. A legal notice was issued in his name. But he could not be found. Now suddenly he appeared with money in hand. The clerk located his promissory note, calculated the interest in his own fashion and finalized the net amount owed by the borrower. On hearing the figure, the person almost fainted. 'So much! How can I pay that much! I did not know the compounding process of interest,' he complained.

The clerk calmly replied, 'Listen, Kanakayya, this is what Pantulu has ordered. If I disobey it, I will lose my job. I cannot accept the payment even if it is short by a single rupee. What can I do? After he returns from Madras, you may appeal to him. In my opinion, his order was final, he won't change it.'

'Oh God, already I have been facing loss after loss. I have taken a loan mortgaging my house, and have been clearing off my debts one after another with that money. Yours is the only remaining large loan. Will you kindly plead with Pantulu on my behalf, for mercy's sake, sir?'

Kanakayya was a cloth merchant. He purchased cloths at wholesale rate and traveled around in villages carrying a bundle of them and selling them door-to-door. Once, while he was asleep in a public inn, keeping the bundle under his head, it was stolen. By the time he returned home, empty-handed, his wife was bed-ridden. He could not make both ends meet.

The clerk spoke to him in a sympathetic voice, 'Kanakayya, I will show you a way out of the present crisis. You pay the money you have brought with you now and execute a fresh promissory note for the balance due. If you delay any longer, the money on hand today may not be there tomorrow, and as they say, the growth of interest is faster than the speed of a horse. Even if you prostrate before Pantulu and pray for mercy he will never yield. Tell me, how much do have you now with you? Let me finalize your transaction.'

The clerk was worldly-wise. If once Kanakayya left the room, who could say if he would ever come back? Kanakayya had no other alternative than to follow the advice of the clerk. A fresh pro-note was executed accordingly.

Krishna observed the incident and wondered at his grandfather's money-lending practices. He sympathized with Kanakayya. He could not understand why his grandfather was squeezing money from needy people unsympathetically. He wondered whether it was the same grandfather who was very charitable elsewhere and was secretly helping poor students. Why this duality? How could two contradictory behavior patterns exist in the same person?

Until that time Krishna had a great regard for his grandfather. Of late, Krishna had been thinking of unmasking his grandfather so that he could understand his real, inner nature. He had been observing individuals with such dual personalities all around him.

***

One day, Krishna lay on his bed and closed his eyes tightly. It was pitch-dark. When he pressed his eyeballs covering them with one hand, he could see a streak of light all over the horizon. Some shadows appeared in different colors such as azure, light green, golden brown and sometimes light yellow and red. Shades turned into visible figures and images. Smoke-like columns passed his visual field like rings. These images appeared mingling with one another and then vanished. From the fast-disappearing images, all of sudden, a penetrating ray of light passed through the mental sky like a flying arrow. When he closed his forehead with his palm, everything vanished instantly. He observed such occurrences carefully, minutely, intently and with interest. He thought to himself, 'It's a wonderful game.' So it became his hobby.

***

Pantulu performed the memorial ceremony of his daughter, Bharati, each year, on a large scale. That year, Krishna's father also attended the ceremony. Krishna and Sitaramayya would be meeting each other for the first time after many years.

Krishna was told of the upcoming visit. 'Who is this father everyone is talking about? What does he look like?' he wondered. He tried to imagine what his father looked like but could not. Nor could he picture his mother.

On that day, as expected, Sitaramayya arrived at the house of his former father-in-law. Pantulu introduced him to Krishna saying, 'Krishna, this is your father.'

As though it was a casual meeting, Krishna looked at him and thought, 'This man is my father, they say.'

Pantulu told Krishna, 'Why don't you go to him and sit with him?'

'This is the first time for the boy to see his father. Naturally he is hesitant,' said someone who was watching the scene.

Sitaramayya looked at his son with wide-open eyes. The boy looked as if he was made of gold. He was charming. He felt an inexplicable joy on seeing him. His affectionate heart began to throb.

Pantulu repeated, 'Kittu! Go to you father and sit with him.'

Krishna approached his father and the father greeted him affectionately and sat him on his lap. Touching his head tenderly, he asked 'Krishna, how are you? Studying well? I heard that you can recite Sanskrit verses.' The boy nodded his head and replied slowly, 'I am all right.' After a few moments, Sitaramayya asked him to go out and play. Krishna jumped out like a bird in a cage which was just set free.

From the moment Krishna saw his father, a number of questions and doubts began to arise in his mind. 'How do I know that he is my father? Everyone is saying with one voice that he is my father. Does that make him my father? A stranger is brought before me and I am told that he is my father. If he has not been introduced, how could I know him as my father?'

'So somebody should introduce a new thing for the first time. If it is not introduced, whatever that thing may be, it cannot be recognized.' For this question, 'How can I know him as my father?' Krishna wanted a logical answer. Doubting and questioning everything were two of his important mental activities of that time. 'How can I know him as my father?' he pondered on and on. No clear answer came to his mind. The question wound itself inside him and entwined him in its deep folds.

***

Arrangements were already made for the memorial ceremony of Bharati on the following day. A number of guests were also expected to attend the lunch. Nobody paid any special attention to Krishna and his morning needs. He was angry. He quarreled with his grandmother. She tried to pacify him. But his anger did not subside. He looked for an outlet for his wrath. The fried *urad-dahl* cakes in a large platter received

his attention. He began to pick them and break them up into pieces, one after another. He turned to the nearby basket and began to break up the steamed-rice cakes in it also. The crumbs were thrown all over the floor. If anybody objected, he retorted, 'It's none of your business. I will do as I please.'

Then Pantulu came in an angry mood. Krishna did not pay attention to his grandfather. Pantulu shouted at him, 'You kink, what do you think you are doing? What's the matter with you?' Krishna pretended not to listen. He continued to break up cakes and drop the pieces.

Pantulu could not control his anger and lost his temper. He removed his waist belt and lashed his grandson twice with it. 'Your misbehavior is becoming more and more intolerable. You have neither respect nor fear for anyone. I tried to bring you round in all possible ways. We have pampered you enough!' he roared.

The onlookers could not believe their eyes and were shocked at this turn of events. In a fraction of a second the belt was in the hand of Krishna. He was furious. Biting his teeth he retorted vehemently, 'Who are you to beat me? Who gave you the right to slash me? Simply because I am a child, you want to treat me inhumanly? What do you know about me? Be careful!' Thus warning, Krishna paid back the slashes with interest on Pantulu's back ruthlessly. His "revolt" caused uproar in household. His eyes were red and his breathing was hard. He was in a mood of total revenge at that moment.

It appeared as though in the place of the boy Krishna there stood a grown-up person wreaking vengeance upon Pantulu. Pantulu was standing breathless and aghast. He never dreamed of such a revolt from his grandson. With blank looks and silenced mouth, Pantulu stood staring at Krishna.

Everyone around had been afraid of Pantulu. No one dared to face him or attack him. Everyone expected Pantulu to react violently, but he did not react at all. Krishna had been a child in his arms. Rather, the revolt of Krishna caused dismay and surprise in him. He became calm and reflective.

He did not treat this act as an indication of Krishna's arrogance. To his mind, all that had happened represented an action-reaction process. The incident was a clear reflection of Krishna's budding self-respect, personal independence and a strong desire for freedom, he analyzed.

After Pantulu left that room, Durgamma, feeling much for the insult which her husband had to suffer, asked Krishna, 'were you right in beating your grandfather, Ramudu?' 'Then is it right for him to beat me? In what way is he superior?' he questioned her back. He looked around as if he was warning everyone, 'If I am meddled with, I will not take it. I don't care for anyone.' There was not a trace of repentance in him. He would never allow anybody to boss over him nor would he be submissive to anyone in life.

Pantulu never beat him again.

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Krishna continued to be indifferent to his education. And that continued to be a major concern for Pantulu.

'Durga, he won't study as long as he is in Gudiwada. He may go astray beyond recovery. To put him on track, I feel a change in the surroundings is necessary. I will admit him in the Hindu High School in Machilipatnam,' said Pantulu to his wife, looking for her opinion. 'That's a good idea. His attitude may change there,' replied Durgamma.

Krishna was admitted in the Machilipatnam Hindu High School in Third Form (8th Grade). He was asked to live in Frenchpet with Saraswati, Pantulu's elder daughter.

It is contrary to Krishna's nature to stay long in any place like a "frog in a well". He always liked to travel from place to place and meet new people. He wanted to be free. He was tired of his school, its furniture and teachers. Going to Machilipatnam presented a welcome prospect.

It was a new place with a new school and new friends. He adjusted himself immediately to the new surroundings. Everything went well. Children of rich farmers, such as Mandali and Chalasani were his close friends. He began to move about freely with them, spending lavishly. And his interest in school here too started to languish within a few days. He, however, continued to improve his skills in English.

At Machilipatnam, Krishna was free from his grandfather's supervision. He could do whatever he wanted. In Chinnayya Rao's household, everyone treated him tenderly, keeping in mind that he was a motherless child. Narasimha Rao, the eldest son of Chinnayya Rao, was two years younger than Krishna. He and Krishna moved close to each other and were affectionate to each other as though they were natural brothers.

In Gudiwada, Krishna had a separate prayer room. In Machilipatnam, although he had no special room, he continued his prayers in his own fashion. When he began to meditate, sitting in *padmasana*, he would lose his sense of time totally. One day, at lunch time, his hosts waited for him patiently for a while and then went looking for him. He was sitting in the corner of a room upstairs in mediation. They were surprised at his deep concentration at such a young age.

Krishna was good in doing impressions and mimicry. He imitated different artists and entertained his friends or relatives.

***

In olden days, rich Brahmin families had a strange hobby and custom known as "wedding of dolls". It was performed like an actual marriage, with all its trappings, followed by a sumptuous lunch or dinner. The supposed "elders" at the marriage were chosen from young boys and girls under eight or nine years of age. Boys would wear a shirt, a *dhoti* and an upper cloth over their shoulders and girls would wear blouses, skirts and sari pieces. The bride and bridegroom would also be decked with rich clothes

and gold-covered ornaments. In those days, child marriages were in vogue. People strongly believed that by playing at these doll marriages, their children would be married quickly to a suitable match. The "wedding", however, was a purely children's affair all the way, with its fun and frolic. The whole atmosphere would assume a festive look.

Vadlamannati and Vemuri families were relatives living in houses across the street from each other in Machilipatnam. One day, both families decided to perform a dolls' wedding on a large scale at Chinnayya Rao's house. They duly invited relatives and friends.

Boys and girls were selected and allotted different roles to play. Chairs were placed in opposite rows and all the boys and girls were seated.

As father of the bridegroom Krishna had a major role to play. He wore a new shirt, a *dhoti* and an upper cloth. He sauntered back and forth and raised his voice to show his assumed authority as the bridegroom's father. There were mock arguments and counterarguments over some imaginary shortcomings in the marriage arrangements. Krishna as usual dominated the proceedings by displaying many antics of his choice. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the gaiety and had a great time.

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Krishna was not too much interested in playing with other children. But whenever he did, he was always the winner. In games, every child wanted to be in Krishna's team.

At school, Krishna was scoring minimum marks in the quarterly and half-yearly examinations. He was scoring the highest in English and lowest in mathematics. Final examinations were fast approaching. He was reading the textbooks mechanically, not paying much attention to the content. He used to answer calls as though he had just returned from some other realm.

He was not bothered about the daily happenings around him. It seemed that there was an invisible line of separation between him and others. He had his own internal world. He had his own thirst for something, a thirst which no one else had.

***

Every year, the final examination question papers for the third form were printed secretly in a secure place. In previous years, children were somehow able to get gold of the question papers. So the administration adapted the new stencil system. Only the exact number of copies of question paper required for the test were Xeroxed and the master copy was destroyed immediately after the copying. This confidential work was assigned to an employee by name Subba Rao.

That year, students wanting to get access to the question papers, discussed the matter among themselves. Krishna had immense self-confidence in making impossible things possible; so he volunteered for the task as a challenge.

He advised his rich friends of the Mandali and Chalasani families to round up 100 rupees. Early in the morning, Krishna and his friends visited Subba Rao and offered him the 100 rupees if he could get them a copy of the papers. Subba Rao was afraid of the consequences; so he first turned down the offer. But then, tempted by the money, he yielded.

'O.K., students, this is an extremely secret matter. Except you, no one else should know about it. If anyone else does, I will be fired.' Everyone nodded in agreement. Asking them to wait outside, Subba Rao went into a room and made a few extra copies of the question papers. He rolled the papers in a newspaper and gave them to the children with the repeated admonition to keep them a secret.

As soon as they received the question papers, Krishna and his friends felt that they had achieved something great and were extremely jubilant. Krishna said, 'These are not just for our use; they should be made available for our classmates as well. They must all be benefited. What do you say?' At first, there was disagreement and debate. Finally, they all agreed to Krishna's proposal.

That evening, Krishna stood near a water faucet at the crossroads by the side of the Challapalli Raja bungalow and began to distribute the question papers to his fellow-students as though they were hot cakes.

Everyone soon came to know of the scandal and the school authorities questioned Subba Rao. When he was threatened with possible police action, he had to confess to the authorities and reveal the fact that Krishnamurti was the gang's leader. The management dropped the idea of a police case, but Subba Rao was dismissed.

Immediately the management got new question papers prepared for the examination. Further, they decided to dismiss from school the students involved in the leak. Chinnayya Rao, Krishna's uncle, was a prominent member of the managing committee of the school. He pleaded in the committee meeting that the children be pardoned and their actions be considered a childish prank, as it was their first offence.

Krishna and his friends attended the examination formally but they could not answer many of the questions in the revised test. As usual, Krishna was indifferent to his failure in the test.

On hearing that Subba Rao was dismissed, Krishna assembled his friends and collected another 100 rupees for him. They advised him to seek a job somewhere else.

Pantulu came to know of Krishna's misdeeds in Machilipatnam and became unhappy over it. As a consequence, Krishna had to return to the school in Gudiwada.

Pantulu patiently tried to exhort Krishna to study well. Krishna did not know why he was unable to put his mind to his studies. He did not pass any grade the first time; he had to repeat every one of them.

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One day, Durgamma asked Krishna when he returned from school, 'Ramudu, I have been thinking of asking you about this for some time. I heard that you go to a particular restaurant and eat snacks there. What is it that is so tasty about them? There is neither cleanliness nor hygiene in such a place. If you eat in places like that, won't you get sick?'

Nimmagadda Ramayya ran the restaurant she referred to. It was abuzz with customers from 6 O'clock in the morning to 9 O'clock in the evening. *Pesarattu*[15] was a specialty of the restaurant. With added pieces of ginger, onion and green chilies, it was fried in ghee. A little coconut chutney was served on the side. Everyone in town liked it and the cost was a mere ten *paise* per serving.

Krishna was very fond of it. Any hour of the day, whether hungry or not, if he happened to pass by the restaurant, he would go in for a bite without fail, not alone, but with his friends.

Krishna replied, 'I like the *pesarattu* there. No one on the earth can prepare it like that. It's simply heavenly. So, I go there for it!'

Durgamma smiled and said, 'All right. But why such a long train of followers with you to eat at your expense?'

Krishna replied, 'Is it enough if I fill up my own belly? My friends like it very much too. But unfortunately they don't have the money. So I pay for them. It gives me great satisfaction.' Durgamma kept quiet for fear of hearing a more pungent answer.

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Krishna's intense quest and inquiry began at a very early age. He was endowed with an open mind which questioned everything. He felt that the established social customs and rituals were decadent and degenerate. He wondered why people followed them blindly like slaves.

He asked himself why people were unequal in their endowment and why some were blessed with huge properties which enabled them to enjoy luxuries at the expense of others, while the poor and the downtrodden had to slog and slave for their livelihood all their lives.

The authoritative hierarchical structure in the society disturbed his sensitive, fragile mind. He did not understand why such abominable customs existed in society. He felt it was so unfortunate that people had to reconcile themselves to their fate; there didn't seem to be anything they could do to change it.

His grandfather's house servants had to toil from dawn to late in the night, unmindful of abuses and ill-treatment of the masters of the house. They got accustomed to this system for sheer survival. For his part, although servants were always available, he did not use their services but depended on self-help.

Durgamma had the practice of preparing food afresh for each meal with high quality ingredients; curries were fried in pure ghee and the meals always ended with a serving of thick creamy yogurt. After everyone ate, the leftovers were passed on to the servants.

Being aware of this tragic inhuman culture of ill-treating loyal and hardworking servants, one day Krishna insisted on sitting with the servants to eat the same food that was served them. Durgamma shouted at him, trying to prevent him from eating with them, but to no avail.

A servant boy used to sit daily in the verandah in the scorching heat of the summer, drawing with his hand a ceiling fan made of *vatti* roots with a rope attached to it while Pantulu had his siesta, enjoying the cool freeze provided by the fan. One day, Krishna sat beside him and was about to take the rope to do the job, but the servant boy protested vehemently, 'No, little master, it is not your job; please go. If master knows about it, he will beat me to pulp.' Krishna, however, forcefully took the rope and started pulling it. After a few minutes his arm developed a shooting pain. Krishna asked the boy if he did not have any pain when he pulled the rope. The servant boy shook his head and said, 'No, I am used to it.'

Despite many servants at his beck and call, Krishna would wash his own clothes, clean *puja* articles and sweep his room all by himself. Durgamma repeatedly told him not to do such menial things, saying that it was unbecoming of him. He never heeded her admonitions but continued in his ways. One day she was annoyed with his stubborn behavior and shouted at him by quoting a Telugu proverb, 'It is as though the chief raised a dog as big as a horse to protect his house, but when burglars broke into the house, he himself barked.'

Krishna watched the servants at his relatives' houses also; he was appalled by the wanton cruelty inflicted on them by their masters. Why were the servants reeling under penury? Why did they have to depend on charity? What made them so impoverished? Who was responsible for this state of living?

In the servants' lodging, there were no beds as such, only tattered old mats or bags to sleep on. Such degradation deeply disturbed him. He never tolerated inhuman treatment of servants.

Krishna never treated servants with unkindness; he was sympathetic and soft towards them. To the utter dismay of Durgamma, he would pass on his brand new clothes to the servants' children. Now and then he would give them small amount of cash as well.

One day, Krishna sought an answer from his grandmother to the question of why they were so poor and inferior. Durgamma answered, 'It is not a worthwhile question to ask. It is their fate; they were born like that in this lifetime because of their misdeeds in their past lives. They have to content themselves with what fate destines.'

'What is fate? Who decides it?' He asked himself.

***

The prayer room of Pantulu on the second floor was kept under lock and key. No one was allowed to go into that room. It was not opened when Pantulu was out of station; he always kept the key with him.

Krishna was curious to know about the secrets of the room. He thoroughly searched for the key in every nook and corner of the house. He was determined to open the room. Once, when Pantulu went out of town to Bezawada on court work and Durgamma went out to visit a relative, Krishna thought that it was the opportune moment for him to unfold the mystery. He always had a bunch of keys with him. He told others in the house that he was going out and pretended to do so. Instead, he sneaked into the second floor by the wooden steps. He closed the door at the bottom of the staircase.

He was worried that he might have to try all the keys to open the lock. But to his surprise he could open the lock with the very first key. Making sure that no one was watching, he slowly opened the door to the prayer room. After entering the room, he closed the door behind him.

He could sense an unknown fragrance in the room. He had the feeling of entering a sacred shrine. He scanned the entire room. In it, he did not find pictures of Hindu gods that he could in the prayer room on the first floor. He saw the photographs of prominent people associated with the Theosophical Society.

Why did his grandfather forbid others from entering this room? What could be so special about the people in the pictures? He recognized that one of the photographs was Annie Besant's. She was seen meditating sitting on a tiger skin. She was wearing a pure white dress. Krishna could also recognize a picture of Jesus Christ. There were many portraits around. He looked closely at each of them.

One of them attracted his attention. He continued to look at it for some time. He was fascinated and his eyes were transfixed on the portrait. All of a sudden, his thoughts traveled in myriad directions. His mental bearings were cut loose. He felt a strong force which enveloped and overwhelmed him. The person in the portrait was charming, sublime, noble and seraphic in appearance, representing an ancient wisdom embedded with spiritual secrets.

The portrait appeared magnetic. Some vibrations were emanating from it whirling and swirling. Krishna experienced the vibrations like spirals of waves. The feeling was akin to being played on a keyboard by the fingers of a musician. He fixed his gaze on the portrait and that had a freezing effect. However, he felt unknown yet familiar warmth pervading the atmosphere. He lost awareness of his surroundings. Though the room was small, it appeared vast and without walls. He had no sense of time and space. Everything stood still.

By a divine afflatus his consciousness was awakened by an unknown thrill which he had never experienced before. Some inner voice seemed to be heard in an extremely low tone. He felt that some doors of the inner recesses of his mind were opened.
The portrait seemed to say, 'I am here exclusively for you to discover. Now you cannot escape from my looks. You have a goal the nature of which you are not yet aware, but

must discover. The new task is designed by destiny in the infinite mystery of its divine purpose.'

After a while Krishna became conscious. The mystique moments came to an end. He rose from the very depths of his being into his normal self. He was released from the hypnotic spell. Slowly he locked the room and went down the stairs as if he were emerging from an unknown realm. He walked down like a robot.

Was it a hallucination or was it real? That whole day Krishna was thinking of the person in that portrait. He now knew the mystery of his grandfather's prayer room. But he was faced with another question: 'Who was that great man?'

Krishna opened that room secretly the next day and spent sometime there.

One day, he was browsing through the past issues of the periodical *Theosophist* of the Theosophical Society and suddenly came across the history of the great saints of the Society. There were also a number of pictures in the periodicals. He could immediately recognize that great saint's picture among them.

He read that some saints of Tibet continue to live forever in an invisible form and move about in the world. They are said to be competent practitioners of yoga. They also appear to initiate people and help them along their spiritual journey. Krishna read about the saints and their deeds.

Master Kuthumi is one such master. He is also called "Kutubananda Swami". Krishna learned that he is called "K.H." popularly by the Theosophists.

Now he was convinced that it was the portrait of Kuthumi that he had seen in the prayer room of his grandfather. He was thrilled whenever he thought of him. He was also convinced that some day the help of these saints would be forthcoming in his spiritual endeavors. He continued to read the publications of the Theosophical Society.

In his own prayer room, sitting in *padmasana* posture, he meditated. He remembered the Vedic recitals of his early childhood and they reverberated in his ears from time to time. He knew that the highest knowledge was Self-Realization. For a person who realized the Self nothing would be impossible. So, he wanted to attain immortality through Self-Realization.

A number of gypsies, ascetics, Muslim fakirs and others used to come to Gudiwada and stay outside the town in some abandoned places, in the ruins of Buddhist *aramas* or in the temples. They wore different types of garbs. They would not stay for more than a couple of days at any one place. They were called "spiritual gypsies". The villagers gave them alms. Some villagers asked them for amulets for their children. It was believed that these gypsies had invisible powers. They gave out herbs and powders for treating various diseases.

Late in the evenings, some of the mendicants would go about in the villages singing spiritual rhymes. They were adepts in rendering recondite spiritual lyrics into simple

songs to the accompaniment of an *ektar* (also called *"tambura"* – a single-stringed drone musical instrument). One of the songs conveyed the idea that the body is a leather bag of nine holes, that it may burst at any time and that one has to be watchful in dealing with it. These simple spiritual songs were composed with the aim of teaching people about salvation.

Krishna listened to such simple songs with great attention. He even verified the statement about the nine holes of his body.

***

The house of Pantulu was always busy with visitors, relatives, dependants and others. A distant relative used to stay on for many days at a stretch. She was a devotee, wearing sacred ash across her forehead. She could sing spiritual songs well with her sweet voice. Besides, she was a good storyteller. So, she was called 'Stories Kameswari.'

One day, Krishna observed her hiding something as she was going into her room. Though he watched her, he pretended not to notice anything. He observed through the keyhole of the door what she was doing. She opened her trunk, put the article she had with her in it and locked the trunk. Finding a moment when she was not around, Krishna opened the trunk with his own key and examined the contents. She was a thief. She collected a number of spoons, dishes and eatables, and locked them in the box.

Kameswari preached spirituality in an attractive manner. But what was she doing actually? There was no connection between what she preached and the way she lived. Why?

***

Some children of his relatives came to Pantulu's house once from Machilipatnam. One girl was called "Machilipatnam Girl". One day, all of them were playing and they had a fight. The Machilipatnam girl slapped another girl, holding her head down and pulling her hair. The girl could not bear the beatings and she revolted. She caught hold of the hair of the Machilipatnam girl and tugged it back and forth in jerks. At that moment, Durgamma came by and noticed the assault on the Machilipatnam girl. She supported the Machilipatnam girl and scolded and punished the other girl. The other girl cried.

Krishna observed what all had happened. He immediately shouted at Durgamma, 'It's the Machilipatnam girl's fault. She beat up that little girl first; unable to bear the beatings, she revolted. You have needlessly punished the little girl.'

Durgamma was not convinced. She called for the girl's mother and complained to her. The mother took away her weeping child with her, beating her indiscriminately. After they left, Durgamma questioned Krishna, 'why do you support an outsider girl?'

'You and her mother beat the little girl for no fault of hers. You preach that truth should be spoken and tell me not to speak lies. Now do you want me to speak a lie contrary to what I had seen?' said Krishna angrily.

Was this the same woman who shed tears while listening to the story for Harischandra? Krishna came across very many such incidents in his daily life. These incidents were common in the Tummalapalli house: most of the people had skin deep ethics and adopted philosophy as glamorous talk for public consumption and their own glory. But their morals didn't go beyond their lips. Why this hypocrisy?

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Krishna's father never had a share in the raising of his son. When Krishna was told, 'He is your father,' he showed no reaction except to say, 'I see.' The natural bond between the father and the son had not formed. Krishna never thought about his father.

Sitaramayya lived and worked in Machilipatnam. Occasionally he visited Tenali. He and his second wife, Suryakantam, had a few children. His eldest daughter was named Bharati, after his first wife. Whenever he wanted to see his son, especially in holidays, he would send for him. Though Krishna did not want to see his father whole-heartedly, since he liked to travel whenever the opportunity arose, he went to Tenali and stayed with his father for a few days.

Krishna's stepmother, Suryakantam, was indeed a good mother. Hailing from a decent family, she was a cultured lady with a broad outlook. She had a great liking for Krishna. When he was a baby, he would never let her hold him in her arms. When he did, she would pick him up gladly and affectionately. Whenever Krishna visited Tenali, she paid special attention to him. She always treated him as her own son. But Krishna continued to keep his distance from her. She would have liked to be called "Mother" by him, but he never did. And she never forced him to. 'Call me as you like,' she said. For some time, he called her "Aunty", and later he called her "Tenali Mother".

Sitaramayya was very affectionate toward his son. But the boy was hesitant to get close to his father. He only saw his father when he was sent for. When his father asked him any questions, his answers were always brief. Krishna had only respect but no filial affection or love for him.

When he visited in Tenali, Krishna never felt that he was living in his own house. In Gudiwada, on the other hand, he was the master of the house. He could command anyone as he liked. In Tenali, he felt he had some limitations. So he was keeping himself within his limits.

Other children in the house were affectionate to him, addressing him as "Brother". He did not move freely even with them. He played with them, talked to them and entertained them with his skill of doing impressions. Yet, he always felt distant. They had their ways and he had his.

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Krishna liked his grandfather, Venkatappayya, whether he sent for him or not; he felt free to visit him. Venkatappayya, in his turn, was happy to talk to him. He was

affectionate to him and was attached to him. He figured early that of all his grandchildren Krishna was the most intelligent. Krishna's expressions, behavior and insight made him, in his mind, an extraordinary boy. So, he treated him as special whenever he stayed with him. He also appreciated his selfless and honest nature.

In 1929, the *upanayanam*[16] of Krishna was planned in the traditional manner. Though usually the event is limited to the family and their kith and kin, Venkatappayya wanted to perform it on a large scale. By that time, his property had already dwindled. He sold his lands one after another as he felt that maintaining them was difficult. Still, the *upanayanam* was performed with pomp and glory, as if it was the coronation of a prince.

Krishna put on the *yajnopavitam* (the sacred thread) to the chanting of Vedic verses in the background and received initiation along with the teaching of the sacred Gayatri *Mantram*. Pantulu presented a special golden *rudraksha mala*[17] to his grandson. Krishna enthusiastically took part in the rite and felt that he acquired a new individuality and importance.

Krishna felt that he had entered adulthood and was moving towards Truth step by step. He cleaned his prayer room everyday and made arrangements for regular worship. He meditated, chanting the sacred Gayatri *mantra* a specific number of times with the help of his rosary. His quest for spiritual knowledge was intensified day by day.

One day, Krishna asked his grandfather, 'I would like to perform my daily prayers in your prayer room.' Pantulu was reluctant. There was a reason. Pantulu came to know that earlier Krishna had entered his prayer room without his permission and "contaminated" it. He was quite upset. He said to him, 'Not everyone can enter that room; only those who have received initiation from the Masters can. So don't you go there and ruin its sanctity!'

The Esoteric Section is an important wing of the Theosophical Society. Not everyone was allowed to become a member of it; only those who received initiation were. To attain that eligibility, a devotee must prove by thought, word and deed that he or she was dedicated to the Society and its principles. People who passed the test would be given initiation by the Masters. Afterwards, any co-operation and help which they needed were extended to him or her. Only people who had attained specific spiritual heights were admitted into the Esoteric Section.

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That year, the head of the Siva Gana monastery, Sri Sankaracharya Swami, visited Gudiwada. He was pleased to accept the invitation of Pantulu to be his guest. There was much activity and tumult in and around the residence of Pantulu and preparations were afoot. One had to pay 25 rupees for his *padapuja*[18]. Pantulu also had to arrange a feast for the Swamiji's entire retinue.

On the scheduled day, the Sankaracharya arrived in Gudiwada. He was dressed in saffron robes and held a monk's staff. A little piece of cloth was tied on top of the staff like a flag, which symbolized knowledge and renunciation. The Swami was received

most respectfully by the people of the town. There was a long line of devotees waiting for his *darshan*. Some Brahmin families received him spreading flower petals along his path.

The Swami went on a parade riding on an elephant in all pomp and glory. A number of camels and palanquins carrying people followed him. It was a visual feast for Krishna.

The Swami climbed down the elephant in front of Pantulu's house. Krishna was wonder-struck; he was attracted by the brilliance radiating from the great ascetic. He thought that the Swami had a charming smile. He was simply spell-bound. He also felt that a new realm of life was unveiling itself before him.

The Holy Scriptures might have described such persons as those who had known the Self. He might have even attained liberation, Krishna thought. It was a great fortune to be in the company of such virtuous people. The disciples of such persons serve them and while living with them learn about the Self with their blessings. Krishna wished to become such a disciple and attain liberation. How could he get such a great chance?

He called his grandfather aside and expressed his desire to go away with the Swami as his disciple and to know the Self with his blessings and guidance.

Pantulu felt very happy and immediately conveyed his grandson's desire to his Holiness. Krishna was beckoned. He went forward and humbly bowed to his Holiness. He stood aside with bent head but was peeking at the Sankaracharya from time to time.

The Swami was a man of keen insight. He opened his inner eyes and gazed at him inquisitively. Krishna was a teenage boy of fourteen, smart and sincere, and there was something unusual in his demeanor. His Holiness asked Krishna to come very near to him and putting his hand on his head lovingly spoke to him tenderly: 'My dear child, your desire is noble. I am very much pleased that at this tender age you are aiming at a sublime goal.' Looking at him compassionately, he continued: 'But you are too young to follow me in my arduous tours. I will initiate you into a sacred *mantra*; you must remember it, chant it incessantly, and even sleep by its divine words with the utmost devotion. Then your ardent desire would be fulfilled. My blessings and benedictions will always be with you.' His holiness then asked Krishna to come very close to him and gave him the Siva *Mantra,* secretly whispering it in his right ear.

Thus the Swami anointed Krishna. A beginning had been made for his ongoing spiritual journey. Krishna's heart bubbled with joy. This would be forever a happy memory for him.

And his earnestness soon turned into an obsession with chanting the *mantra* several thousands of times a day.

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11. The Meltdown

In 1932, along the banks of the river Krishna, special memorial rituals for ancestors were performed at the river festival. This festival occurs once every twelve years. Pantulu went to Bezawada along with his family to perform the rites. He made his grandson perform the memorial rite for his daughter. It was believed that such rituals and offerings of food to the ancestors help them on their way to the higher worlds and ultimately to salvation. By performing the ritual, the individual fulfills his indebtedness to his ancestors for their role in his being born in this world. Krishna willingly performed the necessary rituals.

Later in 1933, he accompanied Pantulu to Adyar. That trip was going to prove important in his life.

Annie Besant had been the divine beam of light and power for the Theosophical Society. She was its central pillar. She was approaching the end of her life. Very many spiritual practitioners, Theosophists, philosophers, politicians and others began to flow into Adyar to pay their last respects to her.

Her body was showing signs of decay and her memory was getting weaker. Her vision was becoming blurred and she was unable to recognize even the persons whom she had known for decades. Added to this, of late, she had become stone-deaf.

Krishna first saw her when he was seven years of age, when she addressed eloquently a large gathering under the great banyan tree of Adyar. But now, how she had become like this, he remarked to himself. He stood there gazing at her.

Her big head was covered with silvery hair. She wore a white dress and looked like an angel who had descended from the heavens. She sat in a chair and her expressions and manner were somewhat odd. She seemed to look far away and indifferent to what was happening before her. One by one, the visitors were approaching her and placing flowers at her feet devotionally. Some were prostrating before her.

Pantulu put a few flowers at her feet, bowed to her and stood aside. Next in line was Krishna. He felt shy and stood calmly before her. He was watching the heaps of flowers by his side. But it did not occur to him to pick up a few flowers and place them at her feet. Mother Annie Besant opened her eyes widely and looked at the boy who was standing in front of her. Till that moment, her head had been moving this way and that like the head of a toy. Something suddenly struck her mind; she pointed the flowers to Krishna with her hand and signaled to him to place them at her feet.

Krishna shook off his shyness, moved forward, picked up the flowers with both his hands and placed them at her feet. He bent his head and saluted her with both his hands. Annie Besant looked at Krishna steadily and said, 'After you grow up, you will work for the Society, won't you?' Her words sounded casual as well as directive.

Krishna was confused and did not know what to say. He stood there for a moment and moved aside. She looked at him for a moment and slipped again into her *samadhi* state. Jinarajadasa of Sri Lanka noticed this incident with astonishment. Annie Besant was not talking to anyone for the past few days. She did not recognize old acquaintances, and if she did, she appeared indifferent. She was giving irrelevant replies to questions as though she had lost her mental faculties and was living in some other world. Her reaction to Krishna surprised those who were standing around.

Jinarajadasa continued to look at the boy. After a while, he noticed Krishna by the side of Pantulu. He asked Pantulu, 'T.G.K., is he your grandson?' Pantulu replied, 'Yes, Rajajee.' 'Wonderful. He seems to be a lucky kid. Please see that the boy is educated properly. Afterwards, when the time comes, he will join our Society and work for it.' Pantulu was overjoyed.

After a few minutes, Jinarajadasa asked Krishna to come with him to his room. He asked him to sit by his side. Affectionately, he observed him from head to toe.

Krishna was lively with a beaming face and bright eyes. He felt embarrassed when Jinarajadasa continued to look at him. His searching looks were sharp. Jinarajadasa understood this and tried to make friends with him in a gentle manner.

'What is your name?'

'My name is Krishnamurti.'

'What are you doing?'

'I am studying.'

'Very good, you are very bright and smart.'

Krishna answered all the subsequent questions in English steadily and fearlessly, without hesitation. Jinarajadasa got up from his chair and picked up a book from the shelf. He inscribed his name on it and presented it to Krishna saying, 'Read this book well and understand it. This is intended for special children like you. In the future, it will be very useful to you.' The title of the book was, *I Promise: Talks to Young Disciples*. Receiving the book from him, Krishna felt elevated and proud.

Jinarajadasa continued, 'My dear young boy, read well. You have a bright future and you will flourish in your life. After you grow up, you have to work for the Society like your grandfather. Your future life is linked with this place of work. Whenever you happened to visit here, you can feel free to come and see me. Good luck and my best wishes to you.' So saying, he patted the boy on his shoulder.

Krishna felt overjoyed. He took leave of him. He rushed to his grandfather and narrated what all had happened, in detail, and showed the book to him. His grandfather was happy and opened the book. On the first page he read:

To

My young friend Krishnamurti

Raja

Krishna asked his grandfather, 'Who was that gentleman?' 'He is from Sri Lanka and his name is Jinarajadasa. We call him affectionately as "Rajaji". He is as good as a son for Mother Annie Besant. He is a scholar of many languages. He graduated in Cambridge in philosophy. He is very intelligent as well as affectionate. He is humble at heart. It's your good luck to receive the attention of such a great man. Do as he has advised you; and pay attention to your education.'

Pantulu continued, 'Kittu, read this book well, even if you don't understand it. Read it again and again. You will understand it eventually. Do you know what is written in it? That book explains how to gain the eligibility for the grace of the Masters. It describes the necessary practices one should follow to become their disciples. Read it attentively and assimilate it. Very shortly, you are going to be lucky enough to do your prayers in my prayer room. Be attentive to your education and you too should receive a degree in philosophy like Rajaji.'

Krishna opened the book. It was published in 1915 ~ that means three years before he was born. 'Can I understand this at all?' Krishna wondered, but he read the book anyway. He was surprised to find that it was written in a simple, lucid language. He felt very happy and decided to read the book thoroughly from cover to cover and receive the grace of Master Kuthumi.

Pantulu and Krishna returned to their home in Adyar. Krishna changed his clothes and began eagerly to read the book sitting in the verandah. While reading the book page after page, he felt that its contents were very clear to him.

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Pantulu thought of visiting another important leader of the Theosophical Society. He and Krishna went to a bungalow in Adyar and they had to wait for a while to have his audience. After sometime, he came out into the verandah to meet the visitors. Krishna was sitting there in *padmasana*. The gentleman was a yoga practitioner and trainer and very close to Mother Annie Besant. It was said that he could look into the future with his yogic vision. It was also said that he could know a series of births of any individual. When Jiddu Krishnamurti was playing on the beach of Adyar, he happened to see him and predicted that he would become a great guru or master. Later, Jiddu Krishnamurti did become famous as a great master. He also carefully studied the twenty one lives of Krishnamurti and declared that he had innate abilities to become a master. It was under his training that Jiddu Krishnamurti wrote the famous book, *At the Feet of the Master*.

His name was Bishop Leadbeater. He was also known as Charles Webster Leadbeater.

Krishna looked at him attentively for sometime, expecting him to say something about himself. Leadbeater had a broad forehead and his looks were sharp. He had long ears and was of medium height. His arms were long and he was slim. There was a short separation in his white hair near the forehead and he had also grown a moustache. His nose touched it. He had a pointed long beard like an ear of corn. His face was wrinkled all over. He was wearing a long coat. A cross was hanging from his neck along the coat. Looking at him for a few moments, Krishna recalled a portrait of Santa Claus at Christmas time.

Pantulu anxiously looked at Leadbeater expecting him to say something significant about his grandson. Time passed in silence and there was no reaction in Leadbeater. He was absorbed in himself and there was perfect silence all over. After sometime, he looked at Krishna casually, but there was nothing significant in his look.

Pantulu was disappointed. Having waited for a long time, Krishna too was disappointed with Leadeater's silence. Perhaps he did not have the divine powers attributed to him.

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Pantulu and Krishna returned to Gudiwada. In spite of the exhortation of Jinarajadasa and the constant goading of his grandfather, Krishna could not put his mind to schoolwork. Textbooks appeared irrelevant to him. Whenever he picked up a book, his attention got diverted to other things.

He had the daily routine of waking up early in the morning, answering nature calls, performing the prescribed exercises called "Salutations to the Sun", practicing yoga *asanas* and *pranayama*, taking a bath and meditating in the prayer room for hours on end. Krishna's body was very flexible and he had no difficulty in performing all the yoga *asanas*.

The spiritual books in the personal library of Pantulu attracted Krishna's attention. He read more than half of them and assimilated them. Of late, reading books became a habit for him. All the childhood activities and gossiping with friends decreased gradually and considerably.

All these changes had set in gradually after his return from Adyar. Whenever he read a book he took notes. He could even recite from memory the contents of the book, *I promise - Talks to Young Disciples*, presented by Jinarajadasa. He steadily improved his competence in English and his ability to speak it fluently.

Pantulu continued to be concerned about his behavior: he seemed to have no regard whatsoever for the elders. He always did whatever he thought fit. If he spoke, his talk was dry, point blank and even irritating at times. The concept of being thankful to someone had no place at his heart. He did not listen to anyone's advice. He would always argue vehemently. To top off everything, he would interfere unhesitatingly and rudely in all matters. Regarding money, he had always been a spendthrift, totally unmindful of the resources.

Somehow Krishna completed his middle school education in Gudiwada. He was again admitted in the High School at Machilipatnam and was put up with his aunt, Saraswati. There Krishna met some of his old friends and made some new friends as well. If he happened to know of any friend who could not pay his school fees, Krishna was always ready to help. If anybody asked him for money, he was ready to loan it, even if he knew in advance that the borrower might not repay it.

Krishna was always clean and tidy. Whatever he knew, he would explain to others clearly and analytically. Sometimes there were discussions and arguments between him and his friends. Krishna's argument was always finally upheld. He would never accept the supremacy of anyone; he would never admit a defeat. The friends of Krishna nick-named him 'book-worm' – he was always reading some book or other. Very few books in the school library were left untouched by him.

Tummalapalli Kameswara Rao was a close friend of Krishna. One day, Kameswara Rao and other friends went to meet their beloved teacher, Vinnakota Narasimha Rao. While talking to him, one of them casually spoke of Krishna and his library habit. Narasimha Rao commented about Krishna: 'He has the ability make an in-depth study even of difficult books... He has a great urge to be always at the top, always ahead of others. Krishna has an extraordinary thirst for knowledge... When he grows up, he will definitely shine and be at the top in any field of his choice.'

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Tradition claims that by constant reflection upon a *mantra* one could attain emancipation from the cycle of births and deaths. With purity of mind, Krishna used to pray every day in a systematic, traditional manner, in the morning, at midday and again in the evening. He was regularly praying to the goddess Sandhya, chanting the sacred Gayatri *mantra* 1008 times in each session. He learned the meaning of the *mantra* and concentrated on it while chanting it. He synchronized his breathing with his chanting. At bedtime, Krishna would remember the Siva *mantra*, given to him by the Sankaracharya, and reflect upon it while chanting it.

He did all the prayers and chanted the *mantras* with the utmost devotion and with an immense faith that they all would yield their respective fruits, as mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. Moreover, he followed rules and principles regarding his food, excluding chilies, salt, garlic and other spices. He stopped wearing sandals and would walk barefoot even in the hot sun on paved streets as well as on dirt roads. He stopped using a mirror. He never used perfumes. He slept on a reed mat. He was fasting once in a fortnight, on the Ekadasi[19] day and also on special holidays like Siva Ratri.

Krishna's mind ceased to be tempted by worldly things. With purity of heart, he over-powered lustful thoughts and never uttered foul or indecent language. Needless to say that he abhorred obscene literature. Whenever he happened to come across ladies in his way, he would move aside, humbly bend down his head and make way.

Thus Krishna's daily routine was governed by rigid principles, regulations and purity. With firm determination and self–confidence, Krishna continued his prayers and meditation in a traditional manner, keeping his thought, word and deed in full

agreement with one another. Consequently, his thought process underwent myriad changes.

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Krishna visited Madras several times to be in the cherished company of Jinarajadasa. He raised many questions which Raja patiently answered. A close rapport ensued between them. Raja introduced his young buddy to some prominent theosophists including George Arundale.

One day, Krishna had a strong desire to see Raja. He rushed immediately to Adyar. Raja was free at that moment. When he saw Krishna he observed significant changes in his demeanor, expressions and radiance. After a few days, Raja was pleased to inform Krishna, 'Krishna, the Master has showered his grace on you. Now you are permitted to join the Esoteric Section.' Krishna felt more enthusiastic, energetic and vibrant thereafter. He knew that he was now eligible to enter the prayer room of his grandfather in Gudiwada. He remembered the great Master Kuthumi for a moment and was thrilled.

Krishna returned home from Madras. He narrated to his grandfather in detail about his trip to Adyar. Pantulu was pleasantly surprised at the fulfillment of his grandson's wish in such a short time.

After a cold bath, Krishna wore the clothes intended for prayer time and went into his grandfather's prayer room. Pantulu meditated every day in that room for about an hour. Once he entered the room, the house was kept completely quiet till he came out.

As soon as he entered the room, Krishna experienced a thrill and felt elevated. Being seated in *padmasana,* he observed carefully the portraits of all the great personages, one after the other – the portraits of Morya, Maitreya, Jesus and Kuthumi, besides those of the prominent leaders of the Theosophical movement. A photograph of Annie Besant in meditation, dressed in pure white, was conspicuous. The hair of Jesus was spread on his shoulders. Mother Annie Besant and Master Kuthumi sat on tiger skin. Master Morya and Master Jwalakul were next to each other. On another side, there were Madam Blavatsky and Colonel Alcot.

After glancing at all the portraits, his attention turned again to Master Kuthumi. He started to meditate on him. The hair on his body stood like bristles; he was losing his external consciousness.

Krishna noticed that significant changes were taking place in him gradually, depending upon his eligibility and fitness. That means all the virtues he had wished to have in his *sadhana*[20] were being realized to a large extent.

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Two days after Krishna returned from Machilipatnam, he went out to meet his friends. He spent some time with them happily and all of them went to their favorite restaurant of Nimmagadda Ramayya. All his friends enjoyed eating the wonderful mung-bean pan

cakes. But he did not care to eat them. His friends tried to persuade him to taste at least a small piece. He declined politely, excusing himself saying, 'It's because of my practice....'

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When he returned home, he saw that the house was crowded with neighbors, relatives and others, who were all awaiting eagerly the arrival of some great saintly Swami.

It was said that the Swami had yogic powers. To be specific, he could create golden coins from the air. Everyone was waiting to witness the great miracle. Krishna did not believe the rumor. 'Creation of gold coins from the air or in a vacuum, that's simply impossible. There must some sort of trick being played. Are there such powers really?' Krishna had his doubts.

'If he has real powers to create gold coins from thin air, why is he roaming about from place to place? With his own creations he could as well live happily in luxury. It is sheer magic. He cannot "create" a coin if he does not already have one, under any circumstances. The coins he has been carefully hiding are used in a tricky way to deceive the public. He is exploiting people. I shall observe his so-called powers today and expose his legerdemain,' so thinking, Krishna waited for the Swami.

Within a few minutes, the Swami came along with his entourage. Pantulu cordially received him and took him to the dais. The Swami looked at the people in the audience and was pleased. They bowed to him and some of them prostrated before him.

Krishna observed the Swami closely. He was wearing a long coat, had a long beard and his looks were shifty. The tip of his nose resembled the beak of an eagle. A rosary was hanging round his neck and he had a number of rings on his fingers. He looked like an exorcist.

After a little while, Krishna approached him and questioned him in a seemingly humble tone of voice, 'Swamiji, do you create gold coins out of vacuum?'

'Yes, child.'

'*How, Swamiji?*'

'By power of meditation, whatever we wish we can create. We have such supernatural powers,' the Swami said, looking at the boy from a corner of his eye. Krishna was about to ask, 'Can you create a pumpkin, Swamiji?' when Pantulu intervened and said, 'You can talk to him later; first pay your respects and receive his blessings,' hoping that his blessings might be beneficial to his grandson.

Krishna ignored his grandfather's advice and continued, 'Swamiji, I have a small wish; may I submit it?'

'Yes, certainly!' assured the Swami.

'I would like to see you create a coin with the year 1932 etched on it. If you do, I will feel exalted to heavenly heights,' requested Krishna bowing before the Swami with folded hands.

The Swami felt choked in his throat. Concealing his uneasiness and frowning at him, he asked, 'Are you testing us?' A disciple of the Swami added, 'What audacity!'

Pantulu was angry at his grandson, 'Why are you making all these silly requests? Are you so great as to test Swamiji? First apologize to him!' Krishna did not heed his words. Pantulu got irritated with his indifference and again asked him to apologize. 'Definitely I will, if he does what I want. I'll even prostrate before him,' replied Krishna.

The audience was murmuring, 'Is it fair to invite the Swamiji and insult him like this?' Some people took Krishna aside.

Pantulu pleaded with the Swami, 'the boy prattled in a childish manner; kindly forgive him, Swami!' The Swami in his usual fashion threw his right hand into the air and opened his closed first. Seeing a gold coin in it, the surprised audience gave applause. After an hour, everybody left the place. Pantulu came in and shouted at Krishna, 'Are you mad? You put me to shame!'

'He is a cheat. The jugglers amuse their audience in a better way. They go begging and earn their living. Wearing a saffron robe, this man is cheating innocent people saying he has powers. I don't believe it. Why do people cheat in the name of God?' replied Krishna.

'Anyway, your behavior is not at all proper,' his grandmother lamented.

'That's my behavior. It will never change. I'll not change it to please others,' was Krishna's emphatic reply.

It was Krishna's innate trait to doubt everything, examine it critically and analytically, with a view finally to arrive at the truth.

Krishna returned to Machilipatnam. After a week, someone came running to Pantulu with the news. 'Oh, that day, we found fault with your innocent grandson. Actually that Swami is a notorious cheat. His trick was uncovered at Kankipadu. Inside the right arm of his long coat he had a secret pouch in which he hid the gold coins. By moving his hand skillfully he was releasing one coin at a time. One day, at Kankipadu, the pouch leaked all the hidden coins to the surprise of the audience. They rained blows on him and chased him out of the village.'

Pantulu could not believe it. He wondered how Krishna doubted the genuineness of the Swami. How could he scent that the Swami was a cheat?

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Krishna continued to study the different persons that he was coming across from day to day. Their action and words were not in consonance with each other? Are there no honest people at all?

From birth to death, a person's nature continues to be the same. The mind is fickle. It changes from moment to moment. Opinions thus change constantly. But human nature does not seem to change.

Principles, honesty, moral values, righteousness, ideals and such are all laid out in books and scriptures. Reading about these things is different from assimilating and implementing them in everyday life. Krishna assimilated them right from the time of his childhood. They were part and parcel of his daily life and they molded his behavior.

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The annual memorial ceremony of Krishna's mother Bharati was to be performed that day. Two priests were invited to be the priests for the ceremony.

Brahmins appointed to perform such ceremonies were supposed to be pious, strict followers of tradition and above reproach. They must not eat anything, not even drink water, before the ceremony of offering food to the dead. Any violation of this code of conduct is reprehensible and could lead to harmful effects.

On that day, early in the morning, Krishna was returning home from the marketplace. On his way, he saw a friend near a restaurant. While talking to his friend, he glanced inside the restaurant casually. The two Brahmin priests who were to conduct the annual ceremony were in the restaurant. Krishna wondered what they were doing there at that time when they were supposed to be in his house soon after. He was shocked. What a sacrilege! The two priests were eating hurriedly. They gobbled the food in no time and left the restaurant quickly without noticing Krishna. Krishna became furious at the belief that tradition was of the essence of religion. He could tolerate anything but not the violation of the rules laid down by the scriptures. They were, in his mind, inviolable.

He thought to himself, 'These too carrion crows would now turn up at my house pretending to have fasted. They will pollute the sacred ceremony deliberately. Such persons not only cheat themselves but cheat others to make a living.'

He seethed in anger like a steaming cauldron. He rushed to his house and reported the two ravenous eaters to his grandfather emotionally, expecting a wild reaction from him.

To his utter dismay and despair there was no trace of a reaction. His grandfather heard him nonchalantly. Krishna could not tolerate the silence. To him such silence was despicable. He believed that people used silence to hide something, to escape answers or to avoid unpleasant things. He plunged into a vehement argument and heated words were exchanged.

'Why you are so furious? Is it necessary, all this hubbub? If somebody committed some

thing wrong, should you find fault with tradition? Tradition can withstand such violations. It cannot be invalid. It is eternal. Those people who violate principles and deviate from the righteous path would pay for their sins. They go to the lowest rung of the ladder of inferno. We should not react violently and take things to heart,' said his grandfather, trying to be calm.

Krishna was taken aback. He was bewildered and befuddled; he could not regain his composure for a while.

He said to himself, 'Is this same grandfather who had been upholding tradition all these years?' Dejection loomed large on his pale face. With a look of disdain he said, 'You seem to say that there is nothing wrong if rules laid down in the scriptures are not observed. Well, I'm sorry to say that you are full of contradictions. You are wavering under the garb of tradition and deceiving yourself.'

Again, both were locked in argument. Tempers were raised. Pantulu did not like arguments. In his view what happened was a peccadillo. Why go on with arguments? He was vexed with Krishna and pronounced, 'It is useless to have long arguments over a trivial matter. No further arguments. Please leave me alone.'

Many thoughts were fermented in Krishna's mind. He inhaled a deep breath and said, 'So you have no reverence for old traditions, right? If so, I too can do something to trample the so-called sacred traditions,' so saying, with wide-open eyes, in raging anger, he removed the sacred *yajnopavitam* string that had been hanging across his chest from his left shoulder in a split second and threw it at the feet of his grandfather and stamped it with his foot.

'Why should I carry it deceiving deliberately? What for? It is beyond me. I cannot and would not compromise,' he said thundering, to the astonishment of his grandfather and grandmother. He continued, 'I'll forgo that dead Brahminism, come what may. If I live here violating all principles, hoodwinking myself, I surely will go mad. Destiny might have already chalked out my road map. I wish to get out of this place. But I need money.'

Pantulu was benumbed. He could not understand the retorts hurled at him by his grandson. He wondered how the boy turned out to be so intransigent. He had made many plans for his ongoing journey. Yet he wanted to go away in a different direction discarding the path? Where would he go?

'You little rebel! You are still an infant, a babe in the woods. I won't give you even a penny of my property. According to law, you may not inherit any money, do you know?' Pantulu said gazing at his grandson intently.

Unremorseful and unyielding, Krishna thought for while deeply and looking askance, said, 'Well, I am not begging for your money. I need no charity. I am asking for my mother's money that was left with you. What you have done with it? I have every right to demand that money. No law can deprive me of it.' He paused a while and continued, 'Kindly calculate it and throw it on my face.'

Once again Pantulu was nonplussed. His eyebrows were raised and his eyes protruded. 'Oh, I see, you are demanding your mother's money. Great, my dear boy, wonderful! Fantastic!' he laughed sarcastically.

'Kindly give me my money and send me away. The world is wide open. I can find a suitable place of my choice untouched by dishonesty and impurities,' he demanded.

Pantulu stared unblinkingly at his grandson's audacity. 'A mere teenager rebelled against me! Such temper and temerity!' he thought. And his demeanor changed. He said, 'If you are so adamant and obstinate, then…' he stopped short of completing the unpleasant sentence. 'Then ..?' Krishna demanded thundering, tossing his head up and down for the answer.

Pantulu said quickly and threateningly, 'Then I will disown you as my grandson. Beware. You can do whatever you want; the decision is purely yours.'

Agonizing silence pervaded the room. The sound of the words uttered by Pantulu permeated that silence. Krishna did not expect a warning of such a magnitude from his grandfather. He was startled as if he was perched precariously on the edge of an abyss. His face turned pale. He seemed lost in the turbid thoughts but soon recovered and turned ferocious.

He said in a loud voice, 'Are you considering me as a piece of your personal property such as your turban, your black coat or a book in the shelf? My self-esteem can never be mortgaged for your money or your apparent affection.'

Pantulu listened attentively. Again Krishna continued with a high voice, laughing derisively, 'Well, have I ever meant anything to you at all? No, never. So, before you abandon me, I'm abandoning you. Right now, at this moment.'

Pantulu was aghast and bewildered. Krishna hit him back at a most vulnerable point. With stunned looks Pantulu gazed at his grandson, and his wide-open mouth wore a look of disbelief. He could not gauge his grandson. How should he look at him? The boy had gone astray. What prompted him to become such a twisted person? Who instigated him? What caused this intractable behavior? Where would all this lead to? All these were unanswered questions that ran quickly in Pantulu's mind. He recovered after a while and said with a tone of finality, 'Say what you may, I will not give you even a single penny. You can do as you like; nothing more to add to it. That's all.'

Pantulu left the room to attend to the day's ceremony. He saw the two Brahmin priests, looked at them grimly but did not say anything. He was busy supervising things. Durgamma was there all the time witnessing the tussle between her husband and her grandson. She was quite agitated by the ongoing drama. She sobbed silently.

Krishna left the hall and came to his room. Durgamma followed him and sat on the floor wiping her tears several times. She watched him for a while. He sat on a chair; his whole body became crumpled like a coiled cobra in its hiding place. She said in a voice

choking with emotion, 'Ramudu, you have crossed all limits and barriers between the old and the young. How sad!' She paused a while, took a deep breath and continued, 'To keep our promise to our dear daughter we brought you up with love and affection. You have been the center of our lives. We sustained all hardships and sacrificed many things for your cozy comforts. Your grandfather toiled hard to earn more money. All our energies were drained to raise you.' She stopped to watch his reaction. Krishna remained silent. It was the calm before the storm.

She continued with a pitiable voice of supplication, 'We lived for you and loved you. You don't have an iota of pity? Have you no sympathy? You have reduced us to a heap of rubbish!' She stopped abruptly and pondered a while: Was it truly her grandson who had flouted his grandfather? Or had some devil possessed him? This little brat had told off his grandfather word for word without any hesitation like a seasoned lawyer. What transformation!

Krishna looked at his grandmother peevishly and said, 'Look oldie, you are interfering in my personal affairs. Don't preach scruples and sermons. Those days are gone. I am not fond of your sugar-coated words. Don't get involved in this issue and get snubbed.'

Durgamma was aghast. No repentance, no remorse. His foolish anger had not subsided yet. All of sudden she got wild, lifting her hands and reeking in a helpless manner. 'Oh my God, how many heaps of humiliating words from you even now! Since you are a motherless child we reared you most tenderly, treating you as the light of our eyes, day in and day out. Is this how you reward our deeds? We tolerated all your silly pranks, even your squandering of money. Yet what a bitter lesson we had to learn from you now!' she lamented in a choked voice.

Krishna never cared for her words. He reinforced his argument, 'you have been repeating umpteen numbers of times, "we brought you up, we brought you up;" for whose sake did you bring me up? It was for your own selfish interest and you are purely self-centered. Don't declare that you have done a great, grandiose, mighty deed in bringing me up,' he said in a raised voice.

After a pause, he continued, 'Within a fortnight or less after my mother's death your wonderful so-called son-in-law married again and went his own way. He deserted and orphaned me. Is that not a fact? There was no alternative left for you except to raise me. Was that an epic gesture?' He took a long breath and went on in a caustic manner, 'Why did you bring me up? Who forced you to? Did you look after me for your dear daughter's satisfaction? What would have happened if you had not cared for me at all? Someone else would have taken care of me. If no one had brought me up, my story would have ended right then. No regrets. You are touting that you are the only one who did this noble job in this world. After all, what's so great about your deed?' And he concluded sardonically, 'There are a number of people who are destitute in the world. I too would have become one of them. That's all.'

Durgamma was shocked and petrified. 'What is wrong with you today, Ramudu? Are you under the influence of some evil spirit? Is it not our bounden duty and responsibility to bring you up? Today, as if you have grown long horns over your head,

you are hurting us deliberately beyond limits. Your behavior is most distressing.' She paused and then said, 'All these harsh words from you and then finally you demand your share of money. Can't we say anything in this matter? Should you not respect our opinion?' She stopped and could not say anything more. Silently she started crying. Her heart was heavy. With a quivering voice she finally said, 'Ramudu, your heart is made of stone and is very cruel. You are like an ungrateful child kicking at the mother's breast after suckling. You are inhuman with no trace of kindness. All this is our misfortune and ill-luck.'

Krishna lost his temper and roared like Rudra, 'Yes, you are perfectly right. I am cruel and wicked. I am a *nararupa rakshasa*[21] and am diabolic. I am ruthless to the boot. So what? It is a bitter fact, indigestible truth. I was made like that. I would not pretend to be a man of fine behavior and deceive myself. I will be anything but a hypocrite.' He stopped awhile and added pungently, 'I do not care what others would say. I never hide my feelings. I call a spade a spade. I have no cringing tactics. I do not pose to be a paragon of good qualities as society demands. Two hoots to its putrid rules and regulations, affections, afflictions and attachments. No power on earth could change my nature. Come what may,' he shouted aggressively and left home hurriedly. He did not attend his mother's ceremony.

The decision to discard his *yajnopavitam* was irrevocable. The iron bond which had been forged between Krishna and tradition since childhood had been shattered into smithereens. The albatross of tradition sitting around his neck was guillotined.

Krishna completed 14 years of age. Regularly every seven years a transformation had been taking place in his life. This is the second such change.

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12. The Blossoming of the Lotus

Between birth and death a number of phases evolve in the concatenated life-events of a man. During these phases man metamorphoses physically, mentally, intellectually and otherwise.

Modern scientists identified these phases as sudden changes in the endocrine secretions from ductless glands. In this space-time complex, especially three phases govern the future course of an individual's life.

Human body's architecture is similar to that of a factory. Different types of dynamic forces function in the body in a spontaneous manner and are in a state of flux.

For unknown reasons, the processes of secretion in these glands are believed to change in a septennial cycle, i.e., once every seven years. In tune with the changes in the endocrine glands, and controlled by them, the functions of the different parts of the body are also altered. This process continues throughout the life of the individual. Secretions of the ductless glands act as chemical messengers for these biological functions, including behavioral patterns.

The first phase is a period of seven years of blissful ignorance. Life moves fast and children do not heed to principles and restrictions. They do as they like; the only rule of behavior is "my will is my law".

In the second phase, the desire to imitate others becomes stronger and stronger as the child chooses a role model for this purpose, based on its background and natural characteristics. The person will be a hero or icon for the child and also his ideal.

If, however, the model or ideal individual slides down in the child's estimation, the child faces the anguish of disappointment and acute mental agony. If the child's inquisitiveness and questions are left unanswered, he or she gets frustrated. Such children create problems for themselves. However, they try to solve them with ease and boldness, utilizing their own inborn energies and capacities.

Sometimes such children exhibit dash, tact and skill much more than is normal for children of their age; they shine in different fields with their creative imagination. They behave independently and freely as they like. During this period children appear to develop some supernatural powers such as telepathy as well.

They will not be still or at ease even for a moment and they do not follow a beaten track. The child's body is straight and erect. His cheeks are smooth like silk and shining. His eyes are bright and twinkling. Such children engage themselves in different activities such as games, music, dance, literature, painting and other creative pursuits; and when they get tired, they eat what is available and sleep like logs.

Such children have a strong desire to know new things and visit new places. The desire for exploration has no limits at this age. Their creative faculties blossom. They do not feel shy or inhibited; and they have no hesitation to do anything as they like.

Class distinctions such as high and low, rich and poor do not bother most children during this period. They are selfless and are not greedy. They do not care for the distinctions between right and wrong. They do not speak untruths or lies, nor do they indulge in stealing others' things.

Whatever they see and hear they narrate to others in their own language devoid of any coloring or complication. These children behave honestly and uphold justice and morals in their own way.

In this phase of the spectrum of life, they may not hold any objectives, principles or cultural and religious values except those inculcated by the elders around them.

Then, on completion of 14 years of age, the third phase, i.e., the third septennial cycle, sets in. In this phase, children are livelier with new radiance and show dynamic and attractive features in their faces. Their facial expressions change remarkably. Their understanding capacity increases. They think in a straightforward manner and their imaginative power also blossoms. They become dare-devils and are fearless. These features indicate a readiness of the child to step into the threshold of youth.

The fourth phase of life, i.e., the fourth septennial cycle, begins at the time of the completion of 21 years of age. Individuality becomes more predominant. Mental development will be preponderant at this age. A strong desire, zeal or zest to achieve something unique pervades every activity. The youth struggles hard to establish his own individuality and identity, and he has the necessary mental strength to easily face any obstacles.

At this stage the youth decides the field in which he wishes to flourish in his future life. Sometimes he develops extraordinary characteristics.

His genetic makeup, on the one hand, and the influences of his friends as well as the teachings in the school or college and other myriad environmental influences, on the other, combine to make an individual unique. Thus, what is inherited as the gene complex (genotype) develops into the phenotype (what we see) by the interaction of nature and nurture.

The youth continues to live and work in his chosen field with great éclat during the subsequent phases of life. In those phases, i.e., on completion of the years 28, 35, 42, 49, 56, 63 and so on, establishing a family, recognition in society, name and fame etc., become important facets in the life of the individual.

Recorded human history presents several personalities who have displayed their creative flowering in terms of the septennial cycles of events. This phenomenon blossomed evidently in the case of great musicians, painters, poets, scientists and sportsmen.

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Krishna completed 14 years age and entered the third seven-year phase. In this phase he lived in a different way, distinctly different from others. This can be called an extraordinary phase, because he had some inborn forces operating in him, besides some inherited characteristics. Moreover, he was carefully brought up in a special spiritual and religious environment and training. The training was intensive and it influenced him to a great extent. Contemplative characteristics took deep root in him. As a product of interaction of these internal and external forces, his personality was assuming a peculiar shape. The main motif at this stage was questioning.

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Krishna quarreled with Pantulu and returned to Machilipatnam ruefully. He was attending the high school classes when he pleased. He disliked customs and rituals as well as the cult of Brahminism. But his avid interest in "knowing the self" and in salvation was quite intact. His quest never abated. Krishna's determination to attain "Self-Realization" with the "grace of great saints" remained alive. He had a strong sense of search with its deep stirring of faith in a "guiding guru".

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Pantulu was very careful with his money, and as a result, Krishna could not get enough money to do as he wished. After lavishly spending the money all these years without constraint, he felt suffocated, and found his situation irritating and irksome. He could not overcome the habit of spending money lavishly. For the first time he began to ponder over the intrinsic value of money. He asked himself: 'Why does money have such a great value? Respect, status, prestige – as a matter of fact, the entire world appears to revolve around money.'

His mind began to search for ways and means of making money. One day, Krishna asked his grandfather, '*Tatayya*[22], how could one earn a lot of money?'

Pantulu was going through his papers in a leisurely manner at that moment. He was surprised at this question. He did not reply right away. He had been unhappy with the way in which his grandson had been spending money. He was worried about his future life. Why did he ask this question now? Pantulu tried to understand the motive behind it.

Not being sure that his grandfather had heard him, Krishna again asked 'Is it possible to earn money without undergoing any physical strain?'

Keeping the papers aside and adjusting his spectacles, Pantulu looked at his grandson and answered vehemently: 'No, it's not possible at all. In order to enjoy the pleasures and happiness that money brings one should strive with every muscle and nerve and work hard. Unless one toils day and night in a disciplined manner Goddess Lakshmi will not favor anyone with wealth, you understand?' He paused for a while and continued, 'Lazy spendthrifts are despised by the Goddess of Wealth. Don't you know the proverb: *krishito nasti durbhiksham*[23]?' Pantulu tried to impress upon him the value of

money.

Raising his eyebrows, widening his eyes and staring at him steadily, Krishna asked, 'You mean to say that there are no easy ways of earning money?' He was recalling the recent news about the Derby lottery tickets which fetched pots of money to some people.

After a pause, Pantulu stared at his grandson curiously: 'There are,' he said 'by stealing or cheating, money could be made. But even for them you need intelligence, skill and audacity. However, a booty gained by dubious methods will not last long. But why are you asking these questions?'

Krishna thought for a while and asked eagerly, 'Suppose one's ancestors earned a lot, then?'

Pantulu was vexed with this continuous barrage of questions, without taking note of his earlier answers. Looking at his grandson seriously by knotting his eye brows, he said: 'Even that, how long will it stay? Idle people can devour even heaps of money in no time; only money earned by sweating stays with you; the rest will evaporate like camphor.'

Krishna pondered a while. He had a brainwave. He declared emphatically, 'In that case grandpa, from now on, you will be my tool to earn money. I will make use of you for just that purpose,' and left in a flash. Pantulu was taken aback.

Krishna wanted to acquire sufficient money by any means and leave his house in search of a suitable guru, whoever or wherever he might be.

He came to Gudiwada from Machilipatnam for summer holidays. All his thoughts centered on the question of how to get out of his grandfather's house. He was carefully watching every action and every movement of his grandfather. His object was to snatch keys for the iron safe; but they were invariably under Pantulu's safe custody.

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13. The Mystique of Rishikesh

On that day, Krishna went out to see some of his friends and returned for lunch rather late. Something prompted him, may be his sixth sense, to open the table drawer. His attention was riveted on a single object. He was elated with wild enthusiasm. His unblinking eyes expressed a spark of surprise and joy, 'What luck!' he whispered to himself.

For some reason Pantulu left the keys for the iron safe inside the table drawer inadvertently. Krishna with his keyed-up sense slowly surveyed the surroundings. Durgamma was busy in the kitchen. There was no sign of Pantulu.

Krishna got the keys, quickly tiptoed towards the iron safe and opened it methodically without making any squeaking sounds.

Inside the safe there were several stacks of high-denomination currency bills neatly piled up. He took one small stack, pocketed it, closed the safe carefully and returned the keys to the table drawer. He left the house stealthily like a triumphant spy on his secret mission.

Later that day, he went to his room. There was a sense of excitement. His journey now really seemed not too far off. He coolly collected the necessary items for his travel. The next day there was some celebration in the house. Everyone was busy. At the right moment he slipped out of the house without raising suspicion. He arrived in Bezawada, purchased a first class ticket for the Delhi-bound Express train. He boarded the train which arrived on time. There were only a few passengers in the compartment. The train chugged on to its destination.

It was a mission which would lead him to unknown realms. It was the starting point of his spiritual pilgrimage in quest of truth at the tender age of fourteen years.

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Krishna was headed for a hermitage in Rishikesh at the foot of the mighty Himalayan range, said to be the abode of the supreme Godhead, Lord Siva, and a nerve centre for all the truth-seekers in India.

My Magazine of India was issued regularly from Madras and contained a number of essays on spiritual topics. One issue of the magazine published detailed information about Swami Sivananda who was living in Rishikesh. The Swamiji answered readers' questions regularly. Krishna used to read them carefully. He wrote a numbers of letters to the Swamiji and received personal replies in Swamiji's own handwriting. Krishna was pleased with his answers and developed a great liking for him. He was keen on meeting him in person to pursue his goal, as his erudition was attractive. Krishna thought, 'May be he is my guru to lead me to higher knowledge.'

Swami Sivananda was very popular with his Telugu devotees. A number of people in

search of truth traveled to Rishikesh and settled there. Krishna thought to himself, 'I have been searching for a genuine guru; this Swamiji is such a guru. In his graceful company I shall practice and attain salvation.'

So with great determination and unflinching devotion Krishna embarked on a journey to Rishikesh.

Rishikesh is located at the foot of the Himalayas. The River Ganges torrentially flows down from the Himalayas in that area, and there are a number of clusters of hermitages on either side of the river. One such cluster is Rishikesh. There are a number of choultries[24] surrounding the hermitages. Many yoga practitioners come from all over the country and live in one choultry or another to carry on their yoga practice in the hermitages.

Krishna was wonderstruck on arriving in Rishikesh. He became silent and all his thoughts stood still. He forgot himself for a few minutes. The whole ambience was extremely fascinating, bewitching beyond words.

Krishna accommodated himself in a choultry which was easily available, had a hot bath, changed his soiled clothes, ate breakfast and came out looking for Swami Sivananda's abode. The weather was cold and rather gloomy. The sun disappeared in the thick and transient morning clouds, and white mist hung heavily along the path like translucent smoke.

From a distance he could guess which one of the hermitages could be his destination. He slowly sauntered towards it and enquired a short lean person who was standing outside the verandah smoking a *beedi* whether the Swamiji lived there. The man nodded affirmatively and left.

Krishna eagerly stepped inside the cottage. Swami Sivananda happened to be alone and in a meditative mood. The fragrance of burning joss sticks wafted through the room as if in a temple. Many Hindu gods' portraits were mounted on the wall.

The atmosphere in the *ashram* was tranquil. Krishna felt the latent power of the silence and stillness; slowly a feeling of peace surrounded him. Swamiji sat in *padmasana* radiating a sense of spontaneity and harmony of spirit; an imponderable touch of holiness was evident.

After a few minutes, Swamiji emerged from his meditation and opened his eyes. Krishna slightly bowed his head in a reverential manner with folded hands, doing his *pranams*[25]. Swamiji looked at him enquiringly. He beckoned Krishna to come nearer to have a closer look. In course of conversation Krishna revealed who he was and where he had come from.

Swamiji sat up in surprise. Was this the same boy who had been writing all those interesting and inquisitive letters? He was thoroughly impressed by Krishna's demeanor. With a broad smile of satisfaction he said in a low tone full of compassion, 'My dear child, I am pleased to see you. At this tender age you are lucky to wish for

higher knowledge. Indeed, I appreciate your zeal and enthusiasm.' Krishna told him that he had been initiated by Swami Sankaracharya of Siva Ganga Math.

Swamiji was a hefty personality, stoutly built, and his complexion had a glow. He had a broad face and big ears; his close-cropped hair revealed the bumps on the head. His eyes emanated an oceanic peace. He was a well-chiseled personality and looked like a person in a Ravi Varma[26] painting.

Krishna was very much in awe of Swamiji. He was attracted to his gentle, sweet, suave and elastic approach and his incredibly humble manner. Swamiji was full of compassion, love and care for people.

After fifteen minutes, Krishna took leave of Swamiji and left. Later in the day, Swamiji introduced Krishna to his other disciples rather proudly, as if he was a chosen one.

Krishna vacated his room and found a comfortable cave to do his *sadhana* alone. Rice flakes and thick cream of milk were his regular diet throughout his stay there.

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The sudden disappearance of Krishna from the house created some anxious ripples; a few days had elapsed but there was no news of him. This was the first time he had left the house without notice. The unexpected absence of him disturbed and disconcerted everyone. Pantulu discovered that a stack of cash was missing from the iron safe. He guessed that his grandson had skillfully stolen it for his unspecified journey. They looked for him in Madras, Machilipatnam, and even in Tenali and other places. They failed to find out where he had gone, on what purpose, or why he had not communicated his whereabouts. Time rolled on. Waiting was distressing and agonizing.

Day by day Durgamma felt a growing indefinable anxiety. She sunk into deep bouts of depression. She was mentally withering away. She prayed to several gods for Krishna's safe return. Pantulu's spirits too fluttered, but he contained himself; his habitual mien was intact. He had a presentiment that his grandson would be quite safe wherever he might be.

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After some time, Krishna's resources were running out. He decided to leave the *ashram* and took leave of Swamiji.

Ever since his boyhood Krishna had a strong desire to travel long distances all alone. He liked to visit new places and move among new people. Now his desire was fulfilled. Just as a snake goes about in a number of curved paths and finally reaches its dwelling hole, Krishna started from Rishikesh and returned to Gudiwada.

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There was an ancient tree near Pantulu's house stretched out and spread into myriad branches, almost smooching the sky. Many birds of different species lived in it. Among them was a particular bird called the Indian Roller. Its clamor is considered a good omen. For several days Durgamma had been hearing the clamoring of that bird constantly.

On that day, Durgamma was full of joy and in high spirits for no specific reason. It was a fine summer morning; the season was coming to an end. The sun was shining brightly outdoors. She was busy in preparing mung-bean pancakes with green chilies, ginger and coriander leaves, applying ghee liberally on them. She almost finished her job when she heard footsteps behind her. She turned her head and was stunned. Her eyes were riveted on her grandson standing at the doorstep. She was stupefied. Was this true or was it a hallucination? She was speechless in disbelief. Suddenly she started crying in joy.

'Ramudu, Ramudu, my dear child, you have come back! Thank god!' Her voice choked with emotion. She threw her arms around his neck and embraced him.

Krishna did not reply to her questions; he stood silently, devoid of any feeling. He just wanted to be released from her tight grip. Sentiments never touched him, although he had respect for her feelings of affection and care.

Pantulu heard Durgamma's feeble sobbing and muttering and came out of his room. He was stunned to see Krishna in his wife's arms.

'Thank heavens, he's come back!' All of a sudden his spirits flushed with relief. The whole atmosphere was plunged into an unbroken silence of joy, the silence of reunion. Breaking the silence, Durgamma released Krishna from her arms and said, 'Where were you all these days? Why you didn't you write to us? Why did you leave without notice?'

Krishna opened his mouth and said slowly, 'If I had asked, you would not have given me money or allowed me to go alone.' Krishna was the same as ever – unchanged. No contrition about his escapade.

By that time all the servants and other family members had assembled there. Pantulu gave a rapid glance at his grandson; he came forward holding his hands close to his chest, assuming a humble posture like an obedient servant. 'We are welcoming you, sir! We are highly pleased to see you again. You do not care for us – it is evident. But you need our money, right? Hereafter kindly inform us of your highness's whereabouts so that we can send money for your requirements,' he said with funny gesticulations.

Everyone laughed. The atmosphere was tumultuous. The house wore a festive look by the return of the prodigal son from his first spiritual odyssey.

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Later, Krishna recounted enthusiastically his adventure in detail to his grandparents. He sang a paean of praise to Swami Sivananda. He told Pantulu that he was very

fortunate to have Swamiji as his guru. Pantulu appreciated his grandson's tough spirit in spite of it all.

Krishna brought several gifts. He unpacked them. For Durgamma he purchased specially a *rudraksha mala*. He brought a finely engraved walking stick for his grandfather with a carving of the head of a snake on its top.

By and large, Krishna was overwhelmed by the whole journey, a tantalizing spiritual exploration and a rewarding experience. He was emboldened in his spirits. A streak of adventurous quest sprouted in him. The die was cast.

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One day after lunch, Krishna slept like a baby. He was awakened by a commotion outside his room. People huddled running helter-skelter shouting at the top of their voices to the effect 'It went that way...,' 'Remove those logs...,' 'Search thoroughly,' 'It should not escape...,' as if some danger was to be averted. Krishna woke up and looked at his wrist watch. It was 4.30 pm and he came out of his room hurriedly and enquired, 'what's all this hullabaloo about?'

A servant boy had noticed a big snake coiled outside the little master's room; he alerted the people in the house; but by the time they had arrived there, the snake sneaked into a pile of firewood logs. They moved the logs and the snake slipped and slithered very fast into another hiding place near a coppice.

When they searched the bush with sticks, the snake came out at a fast pace and sneaked under a big stone near the *tulasi* plant. They moved the stone and found a small crevice. The snake came out rapidly opening its hood. Many sticks rained blows on it. But the snake escaped again at jet speed, skillfully skidded and rapidly rolled over the nearby retaining wall and ran out of sight. They were unable to kill it, but it was heavily injured.

It was an uncommonly large snake with a big hood, grayish oily and shining skin and vertical streaks running along its body. It was a king cobra, the deadliest of snakes.

Durgamma was aghast. A vague fear took hold of her. 'What a strange thing! Why does a snake appear on the scene all of sudden time and again whenever Krishna is home? This has happened several times.'

After sometime, a snake charmer was called in. He searched thoroughly outside in the fields playing a bottle-guard-shaped musical instrument to lure the snake out of its hideout, but to no avail. One of the servants brought some seeds sanctified by the local Moulvi *saheb* and sprinkled them all over the house for protection.

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Krishna returned to Machilipatnam to finish his high school studies. He was disgusted as usual with the routine rigmarole of school chores. He adored Rishikesh and deeply

resented his living once again in Machilipatnam. He never had a nostalgic yearning for any thing, person or place. That was his mental makeup.

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Previously, when Krishna was absent for a number of days, he was still marked present in the attendance register. He managed to get the attendance marked by the clerk by bribing him handsomely. But this time he had left for Rishikesh unexpectedly and could not be back in time to see the clerk. Hence he was marked absent for the days he had not attended school.

The Headmaster wanted to reprimand Krishna for his long absence. But as soon as the boy appeared before him and bowed to him in a humble manner, for some strange reason, he changed his mind and spoke to him affectionately.

'Look, Krishna, your final examinations are fast approaching and your attendance has been poor. Rules do not permit you to take the examinations.' Krishna stood silently staring at him with an innocent grimace. The headmaster watched Krishna for a few seconds and enquired, 'How are your studies? You appear to be an intelligent boy; I don't understand why you are neglecting your studies. At least be careful from now on, attend school regularly, and study well. I wish you luck.'

Of late, Krishna started to like playing chess; may be the concentration and dedication involved in the game attracted him. Within a few days he learned the skills of the game. But he did not take the game seriously. He played with his friends according to his mood, but he was never ready to be defeated. In critical moments something would always strike him and he would win the game. He remained undefeated.

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In spite of his total disillusionment with orthodox dogmas and sacred traditions, somehow Krishna was inclined to chant religiously the Gayatri Mantra thrice a day and Siva mantra incessantly, whether he was in a classroom or involved in some other activity. The silent chanting is called "*manasa puja*" and would go on at all times.

For some reason or other Krishna was prone to faint in the classroom; some thought it was epilepsy. But it wasn't; he would regain consciousness on his own and later he would feel physically light like a feather. Was there perhaps a connection between his *manasa puja* and the fainting?

Krishna appeared for the S.S.L.C (Secondary School Leaving Certificate) examination in March, but he failed in all the subjects except languages. His scores were high in English as usual but the lowest in mathematics. He did not feel disappointed at his failure. He took everything in his stride. This was evident in every aspect of his life.

During the summer he decided to go to Rishikesh to figure out his further course of action. This time he obtained his grandparents' consent which they readily gave.

Pantulu gave him the money he needed. Krishna promised to write to them regularly twice a week.

He arrived in Rishikesh. Swamiji was sitting alone staring at the entrance of his abode as if he had been expecting someone. He was immensely happy to see Krishna. Krishna sat near him after doing his *pranams*.

Krishna started his diligent practice of *ashtanga* yoga[27]. He was plunged in deep meditation in a cave for hours together; he would lose his sense of time. His body and mind became extremely flexible and supple.

To embark on a long and arduous journey of any kind one must take the first step; for Krishna a beginning has been made for his cherished goal. But he had a long way to go.

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Krishna returned to Rishikesh several times in a year, whenever he had the time to continue his yoga practice under Swamiji's supervision, unmindful of the arduous journey and the huge expense involved.

The Theosophical Society was another place for him to visit on and off. He went to these two places again and again like a thread ball which moves across a weaver's wasp left and right.

Now Krishna proceeded to Madras to meet his other chosen guru, Jinarajadasa. Raja was delighted. His gentle eyes glistened on seeing Krishna. He was deeply impressed by Krishna's sincerity of interest and his thirst for learning. Krishna was not an ordinary boy among the motley throng; he was spotted by none other than Annie Besant in her last leg of life, just before her death. Could anyone ignore such a prophecy? Raja thought to himself, 'The seed has sprouted; it has to be nourished so that it could take deep roots and bloom its thousand petals in course of time.'

Krishna has also enjoyed the immense goodwill and affection of George Sidney Arundale, another stalwart of the Society, and his wife Rukmini Arundale. They treated him with special attention after knowing that he was the grandson of Pantulu of Gudiwada.

Jinarajadasa and George Arundale were destined to play a vital role in shaping Krishna's future endeavors. They both knew he had immense hidden talents waiting to be groomed.

Raja had decided to sharpen Krishna's talents and develop a well-rounded personality under his tutelage. So he encouraged him to read a number of books to widen his mental horizon.

The library at Adyar had a number of valuable books on every subject. Krishna would pick up any book of his choice and read it. He prepared notes on all the books he was

reading. A number of magazines and periodicals in different fields from all over the world were also available in the library.

From his reading Krishna slowly formed his own thoughts on several issues. His thirst for knowledge was insatiable. To add to it, he had an ardent desire and unflinching ambition to become a great orator some day. He was surrounded by giants and fountainheads of oratory at the Theosophical Society. He was awestruck by their astounding abilities and versatility. Often he thought that 'Oration and expounding views shall be my specific path of life.'

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After returning to Machilipatnam he concentrated on acquiring logical skills. He firmly believed that logic plays a pivotal role in every field. He gathered his friends and established a debating society. On holidays his friends got together and organized debates on different topics of contemporary interest, especially the topic of youth's role in society. The debating society earned a name in Machilipatnam.

In the debates Krishna developed the gift of gab and repudiated skillfully others' arguments. He was able to speak convincingly and logically both in support of and in opposition to any issue. His listeners were spellbound and used to say that his "sword was sharp on both edges". During such meetings Krishna would use uncommon English expressions which others did not understand. If anyone asked him for the meaning of such expressions, he would ask the person humorously to consult a dictionary. He would, however, after a little while, explain their meaning with clear examples.

By and large, Krishna wanted to be quite distinct from others.

In the house of Chinnayya Rao there was a tall dressing mirror framed in rosewood. He would stand in front of it and rehearse a speech, observing his own gestures, gait and facial expression carefully, and modify the sentence structure, intonation and pace of speech as he saw fit. If he was not satisfied with a posture or movement for any reason, he would correct himself, adjusting his body language. He wanted to be a self-made man. Originality was his credo.

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Krishna had a great liking for classical drama in Telugu based on the great Indian epics, Mahabharata and Ramayana. There was one special form of such drama: its dialogues were interspersed with verses based on prosody and were sung by actors in classical style to the accompaniment of music; both the verses and the music would reflect the mood of the situation. Krishna never missed an opportunity to watch such plays. He enjoyed them thoroughly.

In 1936, the film "Draupadi Vastrapaharanam"[28] was released. Vemuri Gaggayya and Kannamba played the lead roles in it. Both were great actors of the day. Krishna

watched the film and enjoyed every moment of it. He was fascinated by Gaggayya's histrionic talents. On returning home he cleverly learned to imitate Gaggayya in expression as well as in dialogue. Assuming the role of a furious Gaggayya, he metamorphosed as Gaggayya and impressed everyone with his aplomb. Either in his reading or in the real world if he noticed or witnessed anything that would absorb his attention, he would instantly make it his own.

In spite of his busy everyday schedule, whenever he was alone, he was conscious of his internal world and his ambition for Self-Realization, which was his ultimate goal.

In September 1937, he wrote his S.S.L.C examination and passed it. He would joke with his friends about his slow academic pace: 'Mine is the M.S.M (March-September-March) batch.' At that time, Madras Southern Maratha (M.S.M) Railway was serving the southern states of India. The trains in that Railway were known for their slowness.

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That day, all of a sudden, something nudged Krishna towards Rishikesh. Without wasting any time, he decided to visit there. Now Krishna matured in his own way, physically, mentally, intellectually and psychologically, and turned steadily in the direction of spiritual practice.

Krishna landed in Rishikesh full of determination. Swamiji was as usual delighted by Krishna's arrival back into his fold. There was a mushroom growth of *ashrams* at Rishikesh on top of the hills on the banks of River Ganges. Swami Sivanada's Ashram was one among them, perched on top of a hill and above the rest.

Quite often Krishna used to stroll out to watch the natural beauty of the surroundings. That day Krishna ambled to his favorite spot. He sat on top of a small ridge on the river bank from where he could command a view of the surrounding meadows and hillocks. It was a rare treat to witness such natural splendor.

The evening was filled with a mystical flavor as only a Rishikesh evening could. The sky was clear and a cool breeze wafted through the surrounding hillocks. Krishna sat quietly enjoying the scenery. He was captivated by the primal beauty of the Ganges River. It was flowing on without end eternally from its mysterious source. For the Hindus the Ganges has a deep significance in their religious pursuits.

Krishna's mind rushed headlong to soar to poetic fancy. The river had a sculptured shape and size and a subtle rhythm of its own. It conveyed a deep message of the secrets of life. It opened many a door to a mystical world. Its water was crystal clear, with the purity of a diamond: one could see at the bottom of the river oval-shaped smooth stones and elliptical white pebbles as clearly as in a mirror. The fluvial nature of every moment of its flow offered a fresh wave of water.

Krishna listened to the music and rhythm of the endless flow of water. He sat gazing in silence at the perfection of its crystalline beauty. He observed the yonder. The grass

beds of various kinds were neatly laid out, which made beautiful patches of never-fading green. Somewhere a little stream meandered along by the green verge.

The cool freshness of the evening lingered and awakened pleasant spirits in him. His excitement had deepened, intensified with pulchritude before him in all its reality; he reached a high watermark of mystical emotion.

He gazed over the plains at the rose-tinted fringes of the horizon, the clouds slowly moving by the volatile breeze. The setting of the golden sun was reflected amid the shadows of the surroundings. Slowly the shadows of the evening sunset lengthened and distant objects assumed an orange tint. The sky put on variegated colors. There was a light yellow strip edging the orange color.

The area was in a hubbub. Ochre robed *sadhus* assembled there taking their evening baths, chanting mystical *mantras*. Some distant sounds came from the depths of the hillocks. The sun sunk in the river slowly to a blazing azure flame. The shades of the dying sun cast a silhouetted line of larches.

A cavalcade of white cranes flew overhead with the curving contours of their folds forming a peculiar arched shape – a U-line. It looked like the crowning of the sky with a moving diadem. They were followed by hornbills, parakeets and small long-tailed gray birds – all home-bound after their daily peregrination. The last flight of birds trilled, sang a full-throated clamor and flew away in a row. The lingering light slowly faded. The darkness engulfed the air in total silence. The signature of the sun came to an end for the day. The goddess of darkness assumed her duty.

Krishna spent some mesmerizing moments there and walked gingerly back into his cloistered world.

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A raw fruit plucked and stored in a dark room covered with hay becomes ripe after some time. Krishna gradually started to achieve different results such as the ones mentioned in the holy books on *sadhana*.

He maintained purity of mind and word. He practiced yoga hours on focusing his attention steadily on the tip of his nose or between the eyebrows. One day, suddenly, he began to experience a series of visions. The sacred books called them regions of divine light. After some days, while practicing yoga, he began to hear divine melodies. From where they emanated he had no idea.

Another day, during his usual practice of yoga, he noticed divine fragrance all around him which he had never been aware of before. Was it an illusion? Does the mind have the capacity to concoct such things? If not, where did the smells come from? What do they signify? Do all the *sadhakas*[29] experience these things?

On another day, while he was deeply immersed in meditation, he felt that his body had become light like cork. Slowly his eyes were able to discern some divine lights mentally.

What was their source? What do they mean? Everything was happening inside his mind. Then what is mind? Where is it located? Krishna had no answers to all these questions. He felt that his mind became free from the burden of thought. He was enjoying a type of bliss. After some time, he returned to his normal state.

One day, Swamiji assembled all his disciples and gave an analytical discourse on the self. Krishna listened to him attentively. Swamiji concluded his discourse saying, 'What is the "I"? The idea of the "I" is an illusion. I am a *parisuddha* Atma[30]; I am the Self; I am *Satchidananda*[31]; I am not this body; I am not this name; I am not my existence.' Swamiji exhorted his disciples to repeat these statements to themselves every moment of their waking life.

Krishna immediately sat down and repeated the statements of Swamiji to himself several times each day for several days. Different strange sound waves spread all around him. He felt totally immersed and embedded in them. Then for a long time he began to reflect on Swamiji's statements as follows:

> Who am I? The mind is full of thoughts. The idea of "I" is one such thought. What is my real form? Why do I not get any idea without the "I"? Why is this idea of "I" so strong and firm? What is a thought? Where do thoughts originate? Is there a state of being where there are no thoughts? Do thoughtless states really exist? If so, how can one get them? Can anybody control the incessant waves of thoughts?

One day, unexpectedly, Swamiji discussed the same point at length:

'Try to know what the "I" is. Become deeply absorbed in meditation. If you do so, after some time, the *vasanas*[32] get dissolved totally and the infinite Atman can be experienced. This is the essence of truth. It is permanent and stable. It is *Satchidananda*. After an hour of expounding, Swamiji concluded by saying. 'Atman (Self) and *Paramatman*[33] are not different. By continuous effort you will know for yourself with your deep internal vision that the Atman is present. If you continue your meditation, somewhere along the line, there will be a turning point when Self–Realization occurs. Then you are permanently liberated and will be in the highest state.'

Krishna heard this speech with rapt attention. He could grasp the inner core of it. It was assimilated in his psyche like water mixed in milk. Krishna focused his whole being on a single focal point and started his meditation on it.

Days and weeks rolled on. Yet his indefatigable willpower never wavered in its aim of overcoming the hurdles of the feeling of "I", of going deep down into the innards and ending its tether and breaking the illusion of "I". He was meditating on 'I am not this, nor that,' 'I am the self,' 'I am *Satchidananda*'. He also went on contemplating the ideas preached by Swamiji. His mind was agog.

One day, he suddenly began to attain different states of mental transformation easily. Strange internal worlds, higher worlds and zones of light appeared before him. Next he

experienced a calm, serene and perfectly silent state of being. He was in that state for a long time and gradually returned to his normal consciousness.

These states of so-called mental metamorphosis did not satisfy him. He was disappointed and felt that he was still where he had been earlier. A number of questions arose in his mind without any coherent answers. It struck him that the yoga practice took one through the spiritual states only temporarily. How could they be the ultimate truth? They could not constitute the knowledge of the Self.

Nevertheless, he continued his meditation with unflinching attention. In course of time, he experienced the peaceful intoxication of the highest state of *samadhi*[34].

One day, he felt as if all his senses were refreshed. His mind was totally at oceanic peace. The silence of the mind was total.

Only one in a billion could achieve such a high state of being, after a whole lifetime of practicing yoga. Somehow Krishna attained this spontaneously. However, he was neither elated nor enticed by such a state of being. He did not become complacent. A grave doubt followed these experiences. He questioned even this state and thoroughly scrutinized and scanned its depths: Was it a super conscious state arising from awareness, wakefulness and mindfulness? Was it a *ne plus ultra*?[35] Could it a mental projection? Maybe an intoxicated mind delights in playing such tricks? It could not be the crown of victory or Ultimate Reality. It was merely a trick of the mind, a self-deceiving camouflage.

He questioned again and again. By no means was he deluded. Perhaps his mighty doubt was a template for a future quest. Is it a *neti, neti or na-iti, na-iti*[36]? Tradition regards this state as *nirvikalpa samadhi*[37].

Many yogis after attaining *nirvikalpa samadhi* discontinue their practice and believe that they have achieved everything. They delude themselves and delude others saying that they have reached the topmost spiritual heights and that what they have experienced is Self-Realization.

Krishna was totally dissatisfied by this *samadhi* state because these experiences lasted only for the duration of the meditation. The memories of the senses remained intact. At the time of meditation the mind spread its myriad wings for the smooth of spiritual journey by the winds of peace. However, the ship remained standstill because the tentacles of the thought-world clung to its keel.

Thus he had been continuously aware that this temporary "state of being" was experienced by him only at the time of the uninterrupted practice and that this could not be Self-Realization.

A number of doubts sprang in Krishna's mind like tides. One day he asked Swamiji in a humble manner to clarify them. Swamiji replied, 'These experiences will not give you permanent satisfaction. You should nevertheless continue your meditation. The accumulated effects of your past good and evil deeds must wither away. Only then can

you realize the Ultimate Truth and attain salvation. Practice should be continued till then. There are no shortcuts for the realization of Truth.'

If it had been anyone else, he would have nodded his head in agreement. He got himself buried there, believing that this accumulated fruits of past deeds had not yet perished and that was the reason for his inability to realize the Truth. Even if he lived a very long life, as the Biblical figure Methuselah[38] did, and meditated, nothing would click; ultimately only death would release him from the quest.

But Krishna was shocked and stunned at the explanation given by Swamiji. He became subdued like a burning flame which was suddenly put out. He was disillusioned and he lost his moorings temporarily. But gradually he became settled and his thoughts became active again. He pondered seriously and argued within himself logically thus:

> It is a fool's paradise to practice yoga for years and years to realize Truth. Something is seriously wrong with this notion. This idea is not only utterly defective but destructive. No other act is more foolish and puerile than torturing the body.
>
> It is not wise to believe that there is some greater truth behind all this illusion. The yoga process is like setting a clock to work by winding it. The whole business is a big hogwash. I have pursued effectively and implicitly whatever is written in the holy books and whatever has been taught by the master. What went wrong? Where does the defect lie? In the traditional knowledge? In the sacred books? Or in the teachings of the master? Where is the crux of the problem?

The break-up was almost final. One day, Krishna went to see Swamiji on some business. The door was ajar. He quietly peeped in. He felt shocked as if he had seen something unusual. Sitting alone Swamiji was devouring eagerly a blood-red mango pickle from the Andhra area and enjoying it wholeheartedly. Though it was very tasty and dear to Krishna, as part of practice he crushed his palate and relinquished that sort of food as poison. But even Swamijis were like everyone else! A yogi became a yokel.

Krishna was aghast. He thought:

> So this is the great spiritual principle and austerity of the self–realized soul of Swamiji! Well, I guess principles are strictly intended for disciples only and not for the palate of the guru. Time and again Swamiji preached especially, 'The palate should be controlled at all costs; only then all other desires can be controlled.'
>
> Swamiji gave a number of discourses and wrote very many books on spiritual practice. But spiritual life cannot have a thousand mental aberrations like this. By giving sweeping lecturers and writing books, one cannot become honest. Eating pickles does indicate the absence of honesty. What is the use of these practices without purity of mind?

However, Swamiji is affectionate, a nice and good guru, a product of the traditional mold; even so, he is nothing extraordinary; he has his limitations. Perhaps he never touched the Real Source.

But why do people not practice what they say? Why is selfishness hidden behind everything? Why do they distribute peanuts to others while eating cashew nuts themselves? Why this dichotomy? Why can't they be transparent?

From times immemorial the sacred books preached attainment of salvation in one shrill voice. But does such a cherished goal really exist? What is the ultimate aim of man? Is it salvation? If such state exists at all, what does it look like? How does one make a path to reach that spiritual state? Buddha, Jesus, Prophet Mohammed and other sages and seers expounded the Absolute Truth, but how can it be proved beyond any shadow of doubt as the Truth? Are there genuine gurus anywhere who touched the Source at all?

Krishna contemplated deeply for a while and come to the conclusion that only the knowledge achieved by self-effort and practice is most valuable and invulnerable.

Thus Krishna freed himself from Rishikesh once and for all, after spending seven years, off and on. A great painter painted meticulously a burning flame which simulated a very authentic glow. Unfortunately, it cannot provide the real warmth for which we light a fire.

As Krishna was surrounded by spiritual doubts another serious question came to his mind like a flash: 'No one has asked me to want any particular thing, to wish any special thing, to eagerly expect a particular thing in the future. But no one has ever told me till now what "want" means. What is that "want" which no one has so far asked me to want?'

So ended Krishna's quest in the traditional mold. Perhaps A myriad mysteries awaited him.

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In 1937, Krishna joined Hindu College in Machilipatnam and opted to study science subjects in his Intermediate course, but his aim was not to become a science graduate. Since he failed S.S.L.C. several times and since there was a heavy demand for the arts (i.e., humanities) courses, he wouldn't get admission in them.

College studies served as a passport for getting a job to make one's livelihood and to settle in life. The Intermediate course became useful for many people in those days to achieve this purpose. As his grandson was studying in college, Pantulu sent whatever amount was asked of him without a question. Krishna maintained impeccable sartorial code. He was fastidious about his tidy appearance. A dress he wore in the morning he would not wear again in the evening. If there was a little stain or dust on his dress, he would change it immediately. In those days there were no barber shops. A family barber would call at his home to give him a haircut. He was particular about his hairstyle. He

had several pairs of the pricey Flex shoes. He would discard a pair after wearing it for six months. He was known as a symbol of sybarite style of living and his friends called him Uppaluri Zamindar. He was always surrounded by a host of friends, rich and poor.

One of Krishna's friends, Sivaram, hailed from a poor family. He received a letter for a job interview in Madras. But he gave up the idea of going to Madras for lack of funds. Someone casually mentioned about Sivaram's plight to Krishna.

On hearing the news Krishna rushed out in search of Sivaram's house. At last he found his dilapidated small house on the outskirts of the town, near an old tree. He called out his name standing in front of the house. Sivaram emerged from the house looking timid. He was surprised to see Krishna standing before him like a guardian angel. They both stood and talked under the tree.

'Is it true what I have heard, that you are not going for the interview for financial reasons?' enquired Krishna. Sivaram looked crestfallen and replied in a low tone of voice, 'Yes, I tried my best to find the money, but I had no luck,' with tears in his eyes. Krishna felt pity for him and moving close to him, said, 'Why did you not ask me when we met the day before yesterday? Here is the necessary money. Go and attend the interview. I can assure you that you would get that job. Good luck!' So saying Krishna slipped some money into Sivaram's hands.

Sivaram was touched by his friend's gesture. He could not say anything except a few words like, 'Many thanks to you,' and bowed his head. Krishna patted on his shoulder and left.

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Krishna attended college rather reluctantly, that too when he felt like it. For now he concentrated his attention on letter-writing along with honing his debating skills. He read a number of books on the subject of letter-writing and he learned how to write letters in an attractive and appropriate manner. He wrote frequently to Jinarajadasa and George Arundale at the Theosophical Society in Adyar. Whenever he received any letters from them he replied promptly. Gradually he developed his own style in impeccable English to express himself. His handwriting was attractive and comparable to that of Raja.

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Krishna had a keen interest in learning new things. Over time, he purchased a number of books on various subjects and subscribed to some periodicals as well. He went through more or less all the books of his choice in the college library. It was a status symbol in those times to have personal libraries. Only a few intellectuals could afford the expensive habit of amassing books.

Krishna ardently wished to have a great repository of knowledge in his personal library some day. All new arrivals in the market invariably had a place in his library. He never

borrowed a book from anyone. While purchasing a book he did not consider its cost. And buying used books in the Moor Market in Madras was out of the question.

Once, the *Hindu*, a daily newspaper from Madras, reviewed a new book, *The Human Machine,* written by E.R. Thomson. The book received a rave review. Krishna immediately made a trip to Madras and searched for that book in every bookstore. He could not find it. Finally, he placed an order for it with Higginbotham's and got it from London. He could not wait to get hold of the book and read it.

The debating society which he had established some time ago was activated and the number of its members gradually increased. Young people participated in the discussions on different subjects such as "prohibition of dowry", "the current political scene", "the role of students in the society", "the future of youth in politics" and "eradication of untouchability". Most of the expense for these meetings was borne by Krishna.

Buddhiraju Nageswara Rao was a reporter for the *Hindu* in Machilipatnam. He was appreciative of the activities organized by Krishna. After each discussion in the debating society Krishna would prepare a brief report of the proceedings, type it up and pass it on to Nageswara Rao. In two or three days, it would be published in the *Hindu*. Krishna would carefully cut and file those news items published in the papers.

> Ideals are not limited to oral discussions. They should be reflected and implemented in everyday life. We, the youth, living in society with others have duties and moral obligations to eradicate the evils of the society. Youth should not be caught up in time-old thoughts and empty shibboleths. We must question blind dogmas which are devoid of logic. The life of youth is what we make of it and we have to choose to make the best of it. We have to set our own values and standards. We should interact with people and shoulder responsibility along with them without showing a condescending attitude. Water always takes the shape of the pipe it flows through; we should shape accordingly the thoughts we allow to flow through our mind and create our own space. The Vedic dictum is, 'Let noble thoughts come to us from every direction.'
>
> Knowledge gives us power. Power generates immense confidence. It provides a dynamic mental attitude and a spirit of action, the road which leads to strength of faith. Do not live in a complacent manner. Do not generalize; think rationally and logically; observe facts without preconceived notions or bias. We should not follow others blindly. Our aim should always be to look at things as dispassionately as possible. Honesty and transparency must be the prerequisite of faith and action. Youth should find the time and energy to do their moral duty to the society. Youth's ultimate mission is altruism. Hold your head high. Only giraffes and not horses can reach the leaves of the topmost branches of a tree.

These were some of Krishna's frequent ideas in the debates. These debates paved his way to become a great orator later in his life.

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Krishna had different interests such as football and chess. Though he personally did not take part in football, he gathered children and organized the game. He provided the necessary paraphernalia. He was the "non-captain" for the team. He encouraged competitions.

In those days, Raleigh bicycle was very popular and was a status symbol for the rich. Krishna purchased a bicycle for himself. He learned the ride on it in no time. But he enjoyed the ride more when a friend rode it with him sitting on its back. He played chess occasionally, which, of course, he always loved to win.

Krishna purchased *Discovery of India* written by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He wanted to have Nehruji's autograph on it. He wrote a covering letter and sent the copy of the book to Panditji in Delhi.

'He is a national leader with a hectic schedule. He must receive hundreds of letters and books from all over the country and abroad. This letter will be one of many. You might even not get your book back. What a waste of postage!' commented one of his friends when he learned of Krishna's venture.

But, to everyone's surprise, within fifteen days Krishna got his book back in registered mail with the autograph of Nehruji. Krishna was immensely pleased about it.

His motto always was that he should have whatever others didn't have. He should maintain his specialty. If he noticed anything special with anyone and if he liked it, he would not rest till he too had it.

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Though Krishna absconded some of the classes, he did not miss his Telugu classes because the Telugu lecturer had a unique and sonorous voice and read poetry in a pleasant and attractive manner. His name was Puvvada Sehsagiri Rao. In those days many people liked his poetry and he held the title of "Kavi Padusha"[39]. Students appreciated his teaching style as well.

The teacher used to recite verses from the book *Firadousi* in a rhythmic manner and students were spellbound when they heard him. The book, about a famous Persian poet, was written by Gurram Jashua, a Harijan poet of great repute.

Seshagiri Rao used to quote a verse from *Firadousi* which conveyed the meaning: 'A king died and a star had fallen. A poet died and the star ascended to the skies. The king lived in a statue. An extraordinary poet lived on the tongues of the people.' Rao would repeat the verse again and again, become absorbed in its beauty and enjoy its underlying poetic nuances.

Duvvuri Ramakrishna Sastry was the Sanskrit lecturer in the college. His intonation of Sanskrit *slokas* was impeccable. He had a special liking for Krishna.

The eminent atheist and ardent follower of Gandhiji, Gora[40], taught Botany in the college. Krishna and Gora had a cordial relationship. For some strange reason Gora liked Krishna immensely. Now and then Krishna would argue with him to the effect that atheism is also a religion, only in a different garb.

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Krishna was prone to faint now and then while attending classes in college. Friends would sprinkle water on his face. Even if water was not sprinkled, he would regain consciousness anyway after a short while. He was hale and healthy, but it was not known why he fainted? Was it a neurological disorder or an organic process of the brain? Was it due to disturbances in the neuronal functions of the brain which could be called epilepsy? Was it some other genetic disorder?

In the college as well as in high school U.G.'s mind did not focus on lessons. He was totally inattentive. Throughout the day he would silently chant the sacred *mantra* which Siva Ganga Swamiji had initiated him into. Every cell of his body, every atom of his being was resonating with the sounds of the sacred words.

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Krishna returned to Machilipatnam and got busy as usual. But he could not organize himself well for want of sufficient time. He thought that somebody should assist him in his daily affairs; then he could save some time to pursue other activities. He remembered a poor student and sent for him. After an hour the student came.

'Venkata Rao, I have some work for you. I will pay your school fees and provide the necessary books. I will also give you some pocket money. Would you work for me?' asked Krishna.

Venkata Rao was non-plussed. He was quiet for some time. A high-profiled young Brahmin was asking for his services by offering a generous remuneration.

'As you please, Sir, I shall be at your beck and call at any time,' said Venkata Rao in a humble voice. He assumed his duties on the spot, and thereafter, everyday, he would attend to chores such as going to the post office, purchasing tickets, magazines and papers and passing the news of the activities of the debating society to its members. Everyone addressed him as the Secretary of Krishnamurti. Krishna was always gracious and kindly to him.

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One day, Krishna was returning to his house in the Frenchpet from the debating society meeting in the closing hours of the evening. At a distance, somewhere near the temple area of the town, someone shouted loudly, 'Mr. Krishnamurti, Mr.

Krishnamurti.' Krishna's his attention was drawn to a running man and he stopped. It was Sivaram. He was panting, being short of breath.

Krishna looked up in perplexity and said, 'What's the matter? Why are you so excited?' He thought for a moment. 'O, now I can guess. You got the job, am I right?' he said gazing at him curiously.

Sivaram nodded his head. He said in a grateful voice, 'As you wished me on that day I did get the job. I joined duty and have undergone some training as well. I returned from Madras just today. I went to your house twice, but you weren't home. I have been looking for you. Luckily I found you unexpectedly.'

Krishna patted on his shoulders appreciating his success: 'I am delighted to know the pleasant news. Well done!'

The evening sky was aglow with the golden hue of the sunset. The *gopuram*[41] of the temple, which was gold-covered, glittered with the reflection of the sun's rays. The evening cool breeze vibrated to the sounds of the temple bells inviting devotees to evening prayers. The atmosphere was engulfed in a strange spiritual aroma. In front of the temple vendors of coconuts, flowers and joss sticks were busy with the devotees.

There was a large *peepul* tree in the precincts temple. Various birds were returning to its branches and loudly chirruping. Pigeons were circling around the temple tower. Some birds swooped down from the spire of the temple to pick seeds of grain from the crevices of the walls sprinkled by devotees for them.

There was a huge anthill inside the temple premises where a stone carved with the letters "Naga Devatha"[42] was erected for the devotees. They believed that a family of snakes lived inside the anthill from times immemorial. On Naga Panchami or Nagula Chaviti[43] day, female devotees assemble there and worship by pouring milk inside the holes.

Columns of winged-ants were busy traveling to and fro inside the holes carrying small food particles. The temple bells continued to peal in the surroundings and the air was filled with solemn mystical sounds of holy *mantras*.

The whole temple street was agog with multifarious activities. The beggars sat outside the threshold of the temple stretching their hands for alms. The wandering *sadhus* and mendicants with their colorful markings on their faces and robes sat idle on raised seats in the verandah.

Behind the temple, smoke columns curled slowly above in the sky like a flying line of snakes. It was perhaps the nomadic tribes preparing their evening meal on smoking fires.

Krishna and Sivaram spent considerable time together and decided to part. Holding Krishna's hand, Sivaram said, 'I shall never forget your timely help; you came all the way to my home, gave money and motivated me to go to Madras.'

'No, Sivaram, you are intelligent. You need encouragement, not empty words of sympathy and pity. That's all; the rest is unimportant. And now I am glad,' said Krishna flushing with satisfaction. Krishna never liked flattery. Sivaram then took leave of Krishna. After Krishna left the scene, he entered the temple to worship as he intended before he ran into Krishna.

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Venkata Rao accompanied Krishna whenever he came to Gudiwada. Everyone in the house had an opinion about Venkata Rao. Needless to say, Pantulu did not relish the idea of a personal secretary for his grandson. He scorned the idea. What need did he have for one? Was he some political leader or a high government official? Could he not do the sundry things himself? Why should he waste money? Pantulu never expressed his opinion to Krishna for fear of a rupture between them. Although Durgamma too felt uneasy, she kept quiet as she was afraid of her grandson's sharp tongue.

Many of Krishna's friends appreciated this setup of his; a few of them were critical. Krishna defended himself by saying, 'Not that I am trying to make a perfect model of myself or stand proudly upon a carved pedestal in the society, carried away by the existing political scenario. I want to test myself and see how it works out and also test others and see how they would react. One thing is certain: what I believe should be put in practice; so I determined to fling myself heart and soul into action, come what may.'

One day, Venkata Rao felt thirsty and asked for water; the servant gave him a glass of water. Without touching its rim with his lips he drank the water and gave back the goblet. Durgamma noticed it and got the glass cleaned again and again with hot water and cleaning powder because Venkata Rao happened to be a Harijan[44].

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In Gudiwada, Krishna had another close friend called Selaka Subbaiah. He was always faithful and devoted to Krishna. For the whole time that Krishna stayed in Gudiwada he was never away from him.

One day, they both went to their other friend Tummalapalli Kameswara Rao and the three of them enjoyed the mung-bean pancakes at Nimmagadda Ramaiah's restaurant. After a while, Krishna gave a piece of paper to Kameswara Rao and said, 'Well, our friend Subbaiah informs me that an Italian doctor is now in Gudiwada. I know that you are about to study medicine soon. So, go and meet him and ask him to translate this quotation.'

Kameswara Rao was taken aback. Opening his eyes wide with astonishment, he exclaimed, 'O my God, you are mad. This quotation, where did you get this? I cannot believe it.' Krishna came across the Italian quotation in his S.S.L.C English "non-detailed" text. His English teacher was not able to explain what it meant. Krishna

consulted many dictionaries and verified with many people when he went to Madras, but to no avail. However, his quest for the meaning of the quotation was still active. Subbaiah now informed him that an Italian doctor was working in the local church.

Kameswara Rao wondered and said laughingly, 'Sometime ago you struggled hard for its meaning. In spite of your best efforts you did not succeed. I thought you had quit. Now it seems you persist in deciphering it. I heard that the doctor's English is poor. Still, I will try. Good luck to you.'

Krishna said, 'Not just try; you should somehow prevail upon him and get me the proper meaning of it.'

After Krishna left, Kameswara Rao grumbled to himself, 'Why could he not go to the doctor himself? Why did he have to ask me? Funny fellow, indeed!'

Kameswara Rao went to the doctor. The doctor was busy for two days. Rao could not get near him. At last, one day, when he was going out for a walk, he accosted him, bowed to him, handed the Italian quotation to him and requested for its translation.

The doctor read it and knew its meaning, but how to convey it in English? He struggled and, by way of gestures and faltering English, he somehow translated it in a disconnected and disjointed manner. Kameswara Rao could correct and rearrange his words patiently and make them meaningful.

The quotation said: 'Don't believe anything. Doubt everything, even the so-called realities. Filter out everything and then extract the final truth.'

Krishna was immensely pleased by his friend's monumental effort and offered him a sumptuous meal at his house.

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Everyone knew that Pantulu was in the money-lending business – he regarded it as a social service for the needy. He was never greedy. Sometime ago, he had lent money to a distant relative. Considerable time had passed but the relative did not pay even the interest let alone the principal. There was no indication of when he might pay. He never informed Pantulu if he had any problems. The account turned into a bad debt. Pantulu's clerk made several visits to him for the money and returned empty-handed. The man was undoubtedly dodging. Pantulu never condoned persons who did not repay money after borrowing it for their urgent needs. One day, he decided to serve his relative a legal notice. Still, there was neither a response nor any further news. He sent a strongly-worded second notice which also proved futile. Ultimately, Pantulu went to the court and obtained an *ex parte* decree.

The clerk went to the debtor's house accompanied by the court *amin*[45] to seize his property. At that moment the debtor's family was eating lunch. Without waiting for them to finish their lunch, the debtor's belongings were thrown out. The children were terrified and they stopped eating. Their half-filled eating plates were also snatched and

flung into the air. The ladies in the house started crying loudly. The house was ransacked and left helter-skelter. It was an unpleasant and pathetic sight.

The debtor could not tolerate the monumental insult hurled at him in a cruel manner through court orders, that too from a relative. The honor and prestige of his family was being tattered into pieces and he was treated like an ordinary beggar. But he never pleaded for mercy. He raved and ranted like a wounded lion. He started abusing Pantulu in the foulest language. His rage had become crystallized into a bitter harangue.

'Why did his two young daughters die untimely in a short span of time? They died because of the sins accumulated by their father. He dissimulated himself as a pious man of virtue, but actually he is not. He disguised his greediness as social service. He is worse than a Kabuliwala[46]; his heart is made of stone. He squeezes interest on interest and amasses wealth. Has your master instructed you to snatch away eating plates of hungry children? He is devil incarnate.' The debtor stopped a while and started again saying, 'Tell your master he will have a gory, rotten and retched death like a mad dog. I am not afraid of anything. Now everything is over and our relationship has come to and end. He has to pay dearly a hundredfold for our humiliation. He cannot escape our family's curses.'

The clerk went back to Pantulu and gave a blow-by-blow account of what had happened. Pantulu listened to him silently and after a while commented: 'Because he is related to me I waited all these years. He crossed all limits. To teach a lesson not only to him but to others as well I obtained a court order.' Krishna stood there in uneasy silence watching the scene. He was crestfallen hearing the abuses hurled by his relative. He was totally ashamed.

Krishna was surprised at the ease of his grandfather. Pantulu sat in his chair cool and calm and looked somewhat proud of his victory. But how could he act in such a wretched way? Krishna argued with his grandfather vehemently. Arguments and counterarguments went back and forth. Tempers rose to a high pitch. Pantulu defended his action.

'Look, my dear young man! In money matters you are a mere novice. You don't know the value of hard earned money.' After a pause he said again, 'I can tolerate and condone anything but not deliberate cheating and wanton duping. The man betrayed my trust. Under any circumstances I would not allow him to walk away scot-free. This is not a question of recovering money but teaching a lesson about what the law can do to such people. It is an object lesson to others as well who evade repayment on some pretext or other.'

Krishna turned to his grandmother who was standing there. She tried to support her husband. Krishna got annoyed. 'Look, oldie, I wouldn't defend it as if it were a heroic deed. He peddled money under the euphemism of social service. Now you can see the result of it. I would not approve his money lending at all. It is unbecoming of his august personality. That man may be facing severe hardship. We do not know for sure why he did not care to reply. Is it right to drag relatives to court and humiliate them? After all, the loan amount is a petty one thousand rupees. It is diabolic and inhuman to take

away plates from children eating on them. Why should my grandfather sully his family honor in public? It is a purely petty and priggish act. May be he gets high by doing such wretched acts,' Krishna concluded vehemently.

He could not fathom the character of his grandfather. Whenever Annie Besant asked for donations Pantulu went to Bezawada railway station and handed over a pouch of silver rupee coins to her. He donated lavishly to the Rishi Valley School and to the International University. On the one side, he appears to be charitable and on the other, miserly. Where have his acts of generosity gone? Why this consummate brutality?

What is the basis of this dual personality? When Krishna pondered on it deeper and deeper, he felt that this dichotomous characteristic is not limited to his grandfather. Split personalities are probably inherent in the very nature of man. Myriad new questions had again arisen in his laboratory of questions.

The action taken by Pantulu, however, had the expected result: terrified by this event, other debtors came forward and duly paid their outstanding amounts in quick succession.

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Once, an ascetic came to Gudiwada and stayed in Pantulu's house for about ten days. He came earlier too a number of times. It was believed that he had studied Upanishads extensively. He was reputed to be especially an adept in the Mandukya Upanishad. He could explain it in an analytical and impressive way.

He was short, stout and very fair like a cucumber and hence some people nicknamed him "Encumber Swami". He was a bachelor of about thirty five years of age.

During his stay with Pantulu, philosophical discussions were in full swing. He would say: 'The physical world has no existence of its own. Everything in the world is a projection of the mind. Matter is the manifestation of the mind; hence mind is the basis for the entire creation. The macro world has evolved from the micro world.'

He used to ask rhetorically, 'Are you born at all?' meaning you never were born, so death could never happen to you. 'It is only *maya*, a divine sport. The visible world is nothing but a projection of the individual mind.'

However, the Swami was fond of good food. He used to eat sumptuously three times a day. In spite of his being immersed in the Upanishadic lore, he was worried about how he would able to pass his old age. He had shudders about who would look after him and how his last days would be. So he tried to collect ten thousand rupees here and there as savings for his future. He sought Pantulu's help in this regard: 'Sir, could you use your influence and help me collect that amount?'

'I will give my share whenever you need it; that is certain. But it is not possible for me to beg everyone for money on your behalf,' answered Pantulu politely.

Whenever this Encumber Swami came to see Pantulu, his attention was always on the collection of money. Krishna wondered at the attitude of this ascetic whose mind was always hovering around money like a hungry eagle.

'Why do people who declare that they have overcome all temptations and renounced material acquisitions give so much importance to the needs of the body? Does that mean that they are not sure of their acquired religious knowledge? The Swami already lived many years; and he would pass his future life also in a similar manner – why doesn't he think as simply as that? Why does he hanker after money? He merely says as a habit: "Living beings have sorrows and joys and they should treat them equally: one should not jump with joy when happiness comes, nor should one sink when is faced with sorrows." Why don't his spiritual knowledge and intellectual development operate in him? If he is so absorbed in contemplation why should he have this worry for security?'

Thus several questions arose in him like tidal waves.

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A friend of Pantulu visited him in Gudiwada when Krishna was in Adyar. He was also a dedicated senior Theosophist. The two of them discussed the ongoing political scenario of the country and Gandhiji's creed of non–violence. In the course of conversation, his friend said, 'Pantulu, I have seen your grandson recently in Adyar several times. He has been well ensconced in that atmosphere; he has been interacting with the top leaders of the society. It seems that he has become dearer to Raja. The Arundales are also enamored by him. When I met them thrice recently they were speaking highly of the boy. Among the younger generation undoubtedly the spotlight is going to be focused on your grandson. That is my reading. As you wished, your grandson will, in course of time, become a perfect and true Theosophist; I am certain of it.'

Pantulu was surprised and elated by the news that came from an authentic source. He said, 'What more can I wish for? I prepared the ground carefully believing strongly all these years that he would some day flower as a true Theosophist.' After a pause he said again, 'However, he is unpredictable and his fulminations are indigestible. He is very adamant and has an abrasive temperament. No one can guess why he likes something and then why he leaves it abruptly after some time. I have been discounting his actions so far thinking that he is still a child and is immature.' Heaving a sigh, he continued, 'He is always behind in school, contrary to his inborn talents and natural excellence. He does not like to study and avoids academic work. That is bothering me. I am in dilemma as what to do or what not to do. Without a strong educational base how can he excel?'

'Pantulu, you don't worry about his future. My impression is that one day he will become a renowned Theosophist. You know well that unless I thoroughly examine and study the person's character I will not speak so much about anyone,' he said in a reassuring tone.

After a long pause, Pantulu replied, nodding his head positively, 'Well, I hope that your

expectations will come true. Of late, he has been behaving in a peculiar manner. He seems to be in a deeply pensive mood. He questions everything and his doubts are drastic. Whatever we say 'yes' to he vehemently says 'no'; he has his own perceptions. His language of logic is acerbic. I think some sort of mental struggle has been brewing within him. I am afraid I have no idea of what route he wishes to take in his life. No one knows his problems and probing.'

Meanwhile a servant walked in with two cups of piping-hot tea and snacks. After drinking the tea, the guest responded: 'Never mind Pantulu, questioning and doubting are the natural traits of every spiritual seeker. Probably he will have inner struggles in his own fashion—we all know that, don't we? After hearing whatever you have to say, it still appears to me that he is moving along in the right direction.'

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14. Dwindling Fortunes

Krishna came to know that his paternal grandfather Venkatappayya was leaving Tenali once and for all to settle in Machilipatnam. Krishna never showed any interest in family matters. He was unaware of the ongoing changes in Tenali. He had no interest in knowing why such a major step was being taken. Whenever he was invited there, he would go there as a guest without any attachment or predilection, although he did like his stepmother Suryakantam who was always ready to shower motherly affection on him. However, he never developed a psychological intimacy with any of them. He had no mental investments in or ties with the family. And he had no particular dislike for his father Sitaramayya, although unconsciously he might have resented him for not providing him paternal care. But he never uttered a word against him. He was like a drop on a lotus leaf untouched by any of the happenings.

After some time, Venkatappayya and his family members bought a house and settled permanently in Machilipatnam. Before that occurred, Venkatappayya's fortunes nosedived. The uncrowned king of Tenali for many years slowly succumbed to the vicissitudes of fate. With an ever-widening gap between his income and his expenditure, his fortunes crumbled over a period of time and separated him from his luxurious way of life. Ultimately he lagged so far behind that it was not possible for him to recover his lost glory.

It took him a whole year to construct the three-storied palatial building in Morispet, rare in its kind and the pride of Tenali. Now for want of money he could not even get the house whitewashed. The building was called *Addala Meda*[47] by local people. Many glass panes of the house were cracked or broken and were not replaced. Several cracks were visible on the outer walls of the building in which small plants began to grow. The pomp and pageant came to an end. The usual commotion of clients, friends and guests turned into deafening silence. Attendants, servants and helpers quit one by one, except for one servant named Virayya who was unwilling to leave his master.

By a quirk of fate, the first blow had occurred when Venkatappayya's wife who had brought luck and prosperity to him died suddenly; her death was followed by his daughter-in-law Bharati's untimely death. He became introverted. Over a period of time he acquired a philosophical disposition. Thereafter, for some strange reason, he stopped showing any interest in his profession. When old clients came to him he gave the advice they needed and referred them to another lawyer.

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Venkatappayya borrowed five thousand rupees form his stepsister a long time ago and he had paid her off with seventeen acres of land to clear the debt with heavy interest and interest on interest. Another relative was given twelve acres of land towards a debt of three thousand rupees. Someone known to him had deposited two thousand rupees with him for safe custody. Venkatappayya used it up in an emergency and he gave ten acres of land to that person to reimburse the money with interest. Thus to pay off different obligations he was forced to part with fifty acres of land.
Many relatives and friends were yet to be repaid. How could he ask them to share his misfortune? He could not ask for more time to pay off the debts. He had no way of

earning more money. And at this crucial time no one who received help from him before came forward to rescue him.

Under unavoidable circumstances he was forced to take a loan of ten thousand rupees from a Kabuliwala pledging his mansion. After a few years the interest on the loan accrued to a huge amount and ultimately he had to partition his mansion and hand over more than half of it to the Kabuliwala.

In spite of all the adversities, Venkatappayya did not lose his mental balance as some people had thought. He was not at all desperate. So to overcome his problems he went to Nagayalanka along with his family to live there and take up agriculture. But the scale of fortunes was tipped against him: just when he was about to receive a bumper crop, a monstrous tidal wave ruined the whole crop turning his borrowed investments into rubble. He had to sell away his lands in that area and pay off his debts.

His house was full of chairs, tables and almirahs. Someone or other was coming to him and asking for them and without any hesitation he was giving them away.

One day, a man remarked, 'Sir, without the slightest hesitation you are giving away good almirahs, chairs and other articles of furniture as soon as someone asks for them.' He philosophically replied, 'Well, it has been lying there idle. I am not using it. If I sell it, I may get few rupees; but with that amount will my financial problems be solved?'

In course of time, Venkatappayya sold away all his properties and cleared his debts. The remaining portion of his three-storied mansion he sold to the Kabuliwala for its market value and left Tenali to settle down in Machilipatnam. There he purchased a modest house. Once celebrated, he now faded into oblivion. He began to follow the principles of *vanaprastha*[48] life in thought, word and deed. He spent his time reading spiritual books.

After settling at Machilipatnam, Venkatappayya wanted to see his grandson Krishna. Whenever he sent for him, he was always told that he had gone to Madras or some other place. One day, however, Krishna showed up suddenly. Suryakantam received him cordially. Venkatappayya was happy to see his grownup grandson. He scanned his grandson from close quarters. The boy looked bright, animated, handsome and bubbling with youthful buoyancy. He seemed to be spirited and intellectually agile. He was on the threshold of youthful verve.

Krishna had lunch with the grandparents. After lunch Venkatappayya called his grandson to his room and they both had a long chat for more than two hours. He found that his grandson's arguments were lucid and that he possessed an unfaltering energy and inexhaustible supply of new ideas. Also, his questions, doubts and probing sounded genuine. He was amazed his at grandson's intellectual caliber.

After Krishna left, Venkatappayya spoke to his daughter-in-law, Suryakantam, and said that Krishna had a definite potential to be an orator and it would be good if he studied law. 'He is the only man who can take the name of the Uppaluri family to the peaks,' he exclaimed on a high note.

Suryakantam was pleased by his remarks and she added, 'I was told that he actively participates in a debating society. Quite often his name is seen in the newspapers. Both of his grandfathers are eminent lawyers; so naturally he has inherited those traits.'

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15. The Maturation

As Krishna stepped into his youth he slowly but surely started experiencing sexual desires accompanied by a type of intoxication, a new tinge of heat arising all over his body, ready to go. It is the natural dawn of youth for every human being under the sun.

But Krishna felt otherwise – it was a tremendous shock to him. Where did the pulsations and perturbations originate? What was their root cause? Why was all this brewing in the deep recesses of his mind and body? How could he root out these weeds of sensuous thoughts which were obstructing his supreme goal? How could he overcome the heat of sensations? He was in an awkward state. His passions developed a profound sense of uneasiness in him. As part of his spiritual life he had discontinued the use of spices, chilies, garlic and salt. He never peeked into obscene literature which stimulates passion. As per the sacred books, he had been totally steadfast and had adhered to an austere life. He did not violate any principle in thought, word and deed. He did not go astray in any way. He always kept his mind, body and soul as pure as fire, absolutely spotless and undefiled. Yet he was experiencing mean and repulsive disturbances. Why could he not control the lustful thoughts?

In the sacred books as well as in the lives of great yogis, it has been described clearly that lustful passion is the gateway to perdition; hence it is despicable as a pattern of spiritual life. As a matter of fact, it has been classified as the first and foremost enemy of a yoga student. Once, Swami Sivananda spoke about it in detail:

> A real celebrate is greater than a great scholar who does not observe celibacy. Lust transforms a man into a debased creature and destroys his radiance, strength, chastity, memory, peace, devotion and knowledge. Lust should be eradicated, as it is a major hurdle for Self-Realization. The man who is lustful is worse than animal.

In the great Bhagavad-Gita it is said:

> Lust is the main enemy of the learned people. Lust clouds knowledge. Always hungry, it is like fire that burns. It can never be satisfied. Just as smoke covers fire, dirt spreads all over a mirror, the placenta encloses an embryo in the womb, lust wraps up knowledge. It hides itself in the senses, mind and the intellect. It deludes the individual. Lust is a great sinner which destroys worldly knowledge as well as spiritual knowledge; hence it should be eradicated.

So it seems that control of the senses is the key to unlock success. Krishna pondered over it again and again. He observed himself closely, intently and minutely. He faced mental tension with conflicting ideas. Suddenly he had a flash.

Like hunger, thirst and sleep, sexual passions and emotions are natural urges in every person. Every youth under the sun experiences them. No one can deny this brute fact. It is utterly foolish and meaningless to control the senses. It is against one's very nature. Can anyone conquer hunger, thirst and sleep? If anyone boasts that he has crushed and conquered sexual passions, he should be a deliberate liar or a self-conceited cheat. A conqueror of passions is a mere myth, simply a utopia.

By practices and exercises emotions, sensations, pulsations and impulses may be controlled temporarily; but the suppressed nature would bounce back like a coil; it would return with greater force.

Krishna came to the conclusion that if inborn and natural tendencies are forcibly suppressed, they may even lead to insanity. 'A celibate mind is like a hundred monkeys,' says a proverb. The yogis who declare that they have controlled their senses deceive themselves and in turn deceived others. Inwardly they must have tortured themselves with lustful thoughts and are eager to indulge in sexual pleasures. Those who have been proclaiming that they are celibates would have ejaculations in their dreams some time or other. It is impossible to overcome intense natural tendencies which are so inherent in the human body. To suppress these sexual instincts deliberately is to invite perpetual conflict within oneself.

'For a long time, my goal has been to become an ascetic by practicing celibacy. Now I know it's just a dream. Should I change my views on marriage? The body naturally desires to satisfy its instincts. In such a case marriage is unavoidable. What is marriage after all? It is a social regularization of sexual instincts. Society approves marriage,' thus Krishna debated within himself the question of sex.

Krishna always tried to understand his inner self by way of introspection and self-observation. The crux of the problem was none other than his grandfather Pantulu. As a boy he had a great respect and reverence for him. Over a period of time, a mental distance separated him irremediably from his grandfather. It was not due to a lack of love and affection on the part of Krishna or pampering on the part of Pantulu while bringing him up. It was due to the vast gap between practice and precept that he had noticed in Pantulu.

In Krishna's view, Pantulu's style of life was full of inconsistencies. What he said was entirely different from what he did secretly. He was magnanimous as well as close-fisted. The big question before Krishna was why no one represented genuine, sober, sensible, chaste, honest and fair values of uprightness and moral code or religious conduct? Why such utter hypocrisy in their lives?

Krishna's young psyche could not dismiss nonchalantly all these disparities in living. It made him sick at heart. Thus he was confronted with several such unanswerable questions. The flame of doubt burned incessantly with more questions adding fuel to fire.

Krishna's mind churned deeply. What is the root cause of all these dichotomous tendencies of the human mind?

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Question after question whirled in Krishna's head. Doubt ensued. He was intrigued. He questioned spiritual pursuits, knowledge of self, salvation and liberation: are they not the assumed goals and aspirations of life? These high standards and ideals are glittering veils. Maybe underneath them lie hidden the inborn natural traits of the *Arishadwargas*[49], "the six internal enemies". Consequently, the life of man has become dualistic in nature. When the basic nature of man is suppressed by cultural and religious inputs, man is unable to function in an unbridled way, naturally, freely and voluntarily, without trappings and masks. Anyhow, what is man's rudimentary nature? Who knows?

Is there really anything like knowledge of the self'? Is the attainment of salvation really the ultimate and unique aim of man? Maybe all this is a deceitful illusion. How can it be proven beyond doubt that Truth does really exist? Of course, blind faith is based on mere dogmatism? Can it be taken for granted? If not, what next?

Power of analysis and logical explanation coupled with deep-rooted insight and a revolutionary attitude began to develop fast in Krishna. Perhaps the doubting attitude is inevitable for the explorer of truth as a prime and vital step in an ongoing progression.

The volcano beneath Krishna's person might erupt at any time. Necessary inputs were in place for a mental revolution to reconstruct his views. An inexplicable dissatisfaction surged in him. The spiritual environment surrounding him appeared to be unnatural and artificial. The ground was prepared for a revolt. There was no scope for compromise. A new awareness began to dawn in him like the rising sun.

16. The Flag of Revolt

Every pathfinder or explorer of truth has a unique and characteristic nature. The uniqueness of Krishna consisted in microscopically dissecting everything thoroughly like a scientist in the laboratory, rejecting everything, and developing a personality of revolt against existing traditional philosophical systems and approaches.

Now Krishna completed 21 years of age. This stage is a turning point in his ongoing spiritual journey. This is the start of the fourth septennial cycle in his life.

His inner psyche began to undergo drastic and dreadful mutation. This paved the way for an exploration of brave new worlds hitherto unknown. A flag of total revolution was unfurled with only the sky as the limit.

The philosophical training administered and the spiritual edifice specially erected for Krishna from his early childhood had been uprooted and destroyed beyond recognition. The dedications, liturgical services and customs became null and void. The spiritual principles he had been following diligently for years and the Gayatri and Shiva *mantras* he had been incessantly chanting were decimated. He felt it was no longer possible for him to adjust to that narrow gilded framework by deceiving himself.

The traditional gurus and swamis could no longer guide him on any genuine path. No one could give cogent and coherent answers to his innumerable questions and doubts. He had totally lost his faith in them. They all appeared to be living in a fools' paradise. There was no living truth in them to be emulated. His spiritual interactions had come to grinding halt.

Krishna had been released from the traditional thralldom. He was slowly transforming himself into a pioneer and was struggling to find a new path to follow and a new guiding light within himself.

In this spiritual insurgency he took refuge in the Buddha. Gautama Buddha stood firmly like a Gibraltar Rock as the only ideal. Krishna considered the six principles preached by him as standards for his spiritual revolt:

1. Don't believe blindly the words of the wise people.

2. Though all others may believe in something, you don't believe it. Simply because it is written in ancient sacred books don't accept it as true.

3. Don't believe in incarnations.

4. Don't believe anything as authority because a number of people blindly believe it to be so.

5. You shall believe whatever you have decided by your own perception to be the truth and accept that as the only truth.

6. Any principle or philosophical theory preached by any guru should be thoroughly investigated and examined by yourself and you yourself should find out the truth underlying it. Only then can you accept it. You are your own guide, your own guru; you are your own light. Never depend on anyone or any source in the matter of search for Truth.

Gautama Buddha was considered an atheist, a materialist and a logician in the spiritual world. The teachings of Gautama Buddha gave Krishna the required solace.

It is said that 'each Truth seeker somewhere along the line gets frustrated and would be disillusioned. That is in the nature of things. When the seeker is at the crossroads, the object of seeking can be abandoned, it can go into flames or it can be extinguished; but deep down, inside, a ray of light still remains.'

It is also said that 'serious spiritual search is a dangerous game: one has to walk on a precipitous path full of thistles and brambles. He can halt temporarily in the middle of the path, but he cannot retrace his steps and go back to the starting point. He is spiritually doomed. That is to say, a serious search is not reversible.'

Who will light the torch which will be a beacon for his ongoing journey? With what gusto would he proceed? Only time would reveal.

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Krishna appeared for the Intermediate Examination in March, 1939. As usual, he failed. He did not study his class texts nor did he regularly attend classes. But he passed the language tests. He got the highest marks in English. On the 7th of July he wrote a detailed letter to Arundale, the President of the Theosophical Society, informing him of the result of the examination. He received a prompt reply.

He never felt any pricks of conscience for failing his examinations. He thought to himself, 'a good thing seems to have happened: I am released from monotony.' Had he applied his mind to his studies he could have easily passed his tests. Strangely, academic studies never appealed to him.

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Pantulu was very much annoyed when Krishna abandoned all his spiritual moorings and sacred texts totally. In the process of revolting against tradition Krishna raised a number of questions for which Pantulu had no answers. For him tradition was inviolable. It might not be questioned.

A number of scholars and ascetics as well as other traditional people regularly visited at the house of Pantulu. Krishna posed to them all sorts of questions. They were overwhelmed by his doubts, questions and logic.

Pantulu, nevertheless, had absolute faith in the intelligence and genius of his grandson. The way in which his grandson had hitherto practiced according to the scriptures, with ardent dedication, concentration and great perseverance, thrilled him. In fact, he was

proud of his grandson. He often said, 'No one can follow the prescribed principles as rigorously as Kittu does. He proved impossible tasks to be possible. Though he is very stubborn, he is at the same time mentally composed and disciplined. But something went wrong somewhere; the dark forces overpowered him. Though he has become a *yoga bhrashta*[50], Kittu is trying to become a perfect Theosophist. This is the soothing solace.' Pantulu reconciled himself thus with his inevitable fate.

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17. The Theosophical Society

Krishna proceeded to Adyar and evinced keen interest in the events there. He was moving around in the Society and attracting the attention of everyone. He was representing the youth and inspiring them. Here he had ample leisure. He devoted his mind to Theosophy seriously. He was reading the various publications of the Society on different religions. He was rapidly improving himself on all fronts. He came to understand a number of things he had never known before. His attraction to the Society was so deep that it turned into an obsession. His curiosity was raised to a high pitch. He soon scanned most of the Theosophical literature. He also prepared notes on what he had read, adding comments of his own.

The atmosphere in the Theosophical Society at Adyar was to his liking. There were noble ideals and ideal persons before him to emulate and widen his mental vision. The Society strived to share its knowledge with its members and encouraged them to sacrifice for others. It provided them with clear-cut guidelines to implement its principles and ideals. Members, nevertheless, had absolute freedom to design their own service programs, irrespective of caste, color, creed and religion or social background, depending upon their level of understanding, intelligence and knowledge. They had absolute and unbridled freedom to express themselves in their own way.

Jinarajadasa explained this in his Introduction to his *First Principles of Theosophy*:

> No member should depend upon others and lose his own abilities, with his inherent intelligence, background as well as tastes. Members should develop their own abilities and choose their field of work. Every member must sharpen his innate intelligence and divide his own path of his life. Absolute freedom of choice is the key factor of the Society.
>
> The experienced personalities in the Society are not like headmasters to give directions. There are no taboos and inhibitions. Of course suggestions are given meaningfully and marginally but the Society does not approve implementation of any principles blindly.

The Theosophical Society was formed at New York, 17th November, 1875, and incorporated at Madras, 3rd April, 1905. Its three declared objects were:

> First: To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color.
>
> Second: To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.
>
> Third: To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.
>
> The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of good will whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study

religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not to punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watch word, as Truth is their aim.

Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and Theosophists endeavour to live them. Every one willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true Theosophist.

Krishna happened to read a letter written by Master Morya in 1882 to Sinnette. In it the Master quoted:

Persons who are desirous of spiritual powers for selfish ends are not expected to enroll themselves in the Society, because they will definitely get disappointed. The persons who wholeheartedly have love and kindness for humanity and who understood brotherhood alone are eligible to know the "Secret education of Theosophy". People who give importance to themselves but not to human welfare are not fit to become our disciples.

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A friend of Pantulu, Chalapathi by name, once came to Gudiwada from Machilipatnam and spent a considerable time with him. He said, 'Sir, the name of your grandson is well known to everyone in Machilipatnam. He is enthusiastically organizing the youth to do good work for the Society. We have been reading about his activities often in the newspapers. We are all pleased and proud of him. All is well but...' he hesitated to complete the sentence. After some time he added, 'If you don't mind, I

have something in my mind I wish to tell you frankly.' Pantulu nodded indicating his consent.

'Our boy is receiving encomiums from every quarter. He is earning good name and fame for our Brahmin community. But it seems that our boy has appointed a scheduled-caste boy, a Harijan, as his personal secretary. It seems that both of them move together closely and eat together in restaurants. Orthodox people like us feel irksome about this,' he concluded in a disappointed note.

Pantulu kept quiet for some time. Chalapathi continued, changing his manner: 'Of course, we too have to change along with the changing times. This is Mahatma Gandhi's age. His mighty influence is sweeping all over the country. The uplift of scheduled caste people has assumed a great importance and is the order of the day. Every effort is being made to eradicate untouchability. The great Brahmin and towering patriot Dr. Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya has scheduled-caste servants in his house. These are the modern times.'

Once, the same question was raised by someone before Krishna. Krishna responded: 'He is an intelligent poor boy and needs some financial help. I engaged his services for my convenience not for my convictions. What's wrong with it? He is also a human being like us. I do not find any difference between him and other boys in the community. I know that my act is not in tune with the present political scenario. It is purely humanitarian. I do not pose as a reformer by this act. I subscribe to the view that all human beings are equal and that it is we who created divisions. I do not care for others' feelings and opinions. I always go according to my own ideas.'

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Swami Sivananda established the Divine Life Society at Rishikesh. In that context, his admirers and followers organized a number of meetings in different towns of Andhra to propagate his teachings. It was decided to conduct a meeting in Gudiwada and Pantulu was approached for assistance. Pantulu agreed to organize a meeting in his Krishna Nivas. He also donated money to the cause.

The organizers were pleasantly surprised to know that Krishna was once a disciple of the Swamiji. They also came to know of his powers as a speaker. Thus they requested him to participate as a speaker as they thought it would be a fitting honor to Swamiji.

Krishna was taken aback. He declined politely, saying, 'It is true, I did once interact with Swamiji. I am sorry, but I may not be the right person to speak on this occasion.' Krishna had neither the faith nor fancy in Swamiji's evangelist work; at the same time, he harbored no disrespect for him.

But Krishna's friends, Kameswara Rao, Subbaiah and Satyanarayana, insisted on his taking part as a speaker: 'You have been participating successfully in the debating society. This is the right occasion to prove your mettle as a budding orator before a big audience.' Krishna refused to budge. Nonetheless, they prevailed upon him and he agreed to be a speaker. He wanted to prepare for a topic relevant to the occasion and wrote a synopsis of it.

A number of invitees from Guntur, Eluru, Kakinada and other towns attended the meeting. Elderly local people who were spiritually inclined had also attended. The meeting started at 4 pm. Selected speakers spoke about the greatness of the spiritual life. A special attraction was Somanchi Linga Raju. He was invited for the occasion from Eluru, as he was renowned for his knowledge of English. He was experienced in translating the lecturers of George Arundale and Jinarajadasa into lucid Telugu. Now he was asked to translate Krishna's English lecture into Telugu. This was a great honor for Krishna.

It was Krishna's turn to speak. He got up from his seat and proceeded to the dais. He was not nervous and looked a picture of confidence. He stood on the podium for a while and looked around at the audience. He observed Pantulu and his friends in the first row. He was addressing a distinguished audience for the first time. All those present were bigwigs in their own right. Now he had to put to test his skills of speaking before an audience.

To facilitate the translation, Krishna started to speak steadily and fluently. Whatever he wanted to say he expressed cogently. After speaking for forty five minutes he concluded his lecture quoting a Latin proverb, 'Life is a challenge, accept it. Life is a mystery, unravel it,' and received a thunderous and prolonged applause from the audience. The topic chosen by Krishna was "Raja yoga under the influence of Theosophical literature". He presented the topic from a new angle and in an innovative manner.

Those who attended the meeting appreciated Krishna's fluency in English. It was the first time for Pantulu to hear his grandson speaking in public. He was immensely pleased and was proud of him. After the meeting, Krishna's friends surrounded him and congratulated him.

In 1925, at the time of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Theosophical Society, Krishna was immensely impressed by the fluent speech of Annie Besant. Later, under that influence, he gathered all the street urchins and addressed them, standing on a mound. His talk on those occasions was plain gibberish. Today he received applause from many dignitaries in the meeting. It was a stupendous experience for him. For the first time, he was thoroughly satisfied with himself.

As Goethe said, 'When you have complete belief in yourself, it means that you have learned to live successfully in the world. Confidence is the key to embolden your personality. Trust yourself. Life is your strength. Go ahead. Conquer the world.' With such self-confidence Krishna began to transform himself into an orator.

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Krishna had a strong desire to learn typing without looking at the keyboard ever since he was ten years of age, when, in 1925, his grandfather took him to the Nadi astrologer in Royapet, Madras, and he watched his horoscope being typed by a typist.

Now the correspondence of Krishna had been growing. Everyday he wrote letters to various people by hand. So he wanted to learn typing. He purchased a portable typewriter, Underwood brand, made in England. He was quite reluctant to learn typing from someone by enrolling in a typing institute. So he decided to teach himself. He followed the "single finger" method which was in vogue in high circles of the British people. Soon he was able to type speedily without looking at the keyboard.

Just to be different, as was his wont, instead of the normal blue ribbon he wanted to use an expensive green ribbon for his typewriter. For signing letters too, he would only use green ink. Every habit of Krishna, right from the dress he wore, was always expensive.

Krishna never prepared drafts for his letters; whatever he had in mind, whether it was a short letter or a long essay, he typed it directly on the typewriter. All his thoughts were organized in perfect sequence in his mind first; he then wrote them out on the typewriter. He was strong in spelling. If there was an error in the letter, the whole letter was re-typed. He would not correct or erase a mistake.

For a long time, Pantulu had lived in a rented house in Adyar whenever he visited there. Krishna re-organized the house to his taste. He had a room exclusively for himself. A cot made of Burma teak was decked with a silk-cotton bed, pillows and blankets for his use. Very near the bed he had a rosewood table with a table lamp. The room was also furnished with a few chairs. Important books were placed on the table on one side. On the other side, a writing pad, notebooks and an assortment of pens were kept. In a corner of the room, wooden coat hangers were set up for his shirts and *dhotis*. In another corner, a place was set aside for his sandals. Everything must be in its proper place; there should be no disorder. Krishna took good care of the room. He kept it perfectly clean, neat and tidy. Whatever he did, he did it systematically with care and attention.

His ironed clothes were arranged in stacks in an almirah. His books were arranged in rows in another glass almirah. Krishna did not lend his books to anyone nor did he borrow books from others. Some of the books he was interested in were available in the Society library. Nevertheless, he purchased them so that he could own them. He was never concerned about the cost of a book. Any interesting book which was reviewed favorably in the *Hindu* paper he would order directly from its publishers in London. He had hundreds of books in his personal library. He was so familiar with his collection that he could pick any book from it in a moment even in the dark.

He read late into the night. After his sleep, he could still wake up early in the morning. His manner of sleeping was also strange. He would curl himself on the bed, touching his head with his knees, similar to the posture of a fetus in the mother's womb.[51]

Whenever youth activities in the Theosophical Society were to be conducted he was the most natural and unanimous choice, as his ability in organizing youth camps was proven. He had several friends in and out of Adyar premises irrespective of their age and profession. Most of them loved to spend time with him, as he was full of exuberance and maintained a cheerful profile.

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18. Encounter with Ramana Maharshi

One day, Krishna was reading a book in rapt attention. A friend named Ramana Padananda came to see him. He was a great disciple of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai. Krishna and Ramana Padananda had met each other sometime ago near the waterfalls of Kurtalam. Ramana Padananda suggested that Krishna should

have a shower under the waterfalls. Since then they had become close friends. Now and then Ramana Padananda visited Krishna and borrowed money from him which he never returned. Still Krishna never sent him away empty-handed. Whoever he might be, if anyone stretched his hand out to him seeking help or support, he would never turn him down. He was known among his friends as a "Bhola Sankar"[52] regarding money matters. For some reason or other he never attached importance to money. He did not care if the money that had been borrowed from him was ever retuned. He never asked for it.

Ramana Padananda had visited a number of hermitages and gurus in search of Truth and finally reached the abode of Ramana Maharshi where his search for higher knowledge came to an end. He took *sannyasa* and changed his name. He was steeped in tradition.

He was attracted to Krishna in the very first meeting. In course of his interactions, he became more attached to Krishna as he was totally impressed by his purity of heart and transparency. Krishna's plain and blunt manner of speaking without reserve or pretension fascinated him. He noticed that on the surface Krishna was rough and tough with insufferable arrogance, but underneath this adamant nature, he was simple, sober and lovable.

The two of them had many lengthy philosophical arguments. Like Parasurama who had massacred Kartaviryarjuna of thousand arms with his powerful axe to revenge his father's death, with his scorching logic Krishna vehemently attacked tradition and its methods. Ramana Padananda was overwhelmed by his arguments and was unable to countenance them.

Krishna emphatically decried tradition belittling a guru's role: 'I would not bow my head or bend my knees before the so-called gurus. I detest their platitudes. None of them inspired me. They lost their credibility.'

'How can you treat all gurus in the same manner just because a few of them proved to be impostors? There are genuine gurus amidst us. Without a guru how can there be philosophical and spiritual progress? A guru is a light in the search in darkness. A guru is the dispeller of our ignorance. Only a guru can recognize your true identity,' said Ramana Padananda defending his point of view.

Krishna laughed mildly raising his eyebrows in a peculiar manner and said, 'Do we have any identity at all? That is my question. Even if there is such a thing, where is the proof that the so-called guru really knows it? I erased all such identity marks in myself. I have one basic and fundamental question? Is there any absolute all-time Truth which is over and above time? Is the realization of such a Truth the sole aim of man? I want a reply supported by proper evidence and proof. Replies quoted from some scripture and those that are not based on experience are discarded totally.' He paused for a while, took a deep breath and continued:

'The prophets, yogis and *jagadgurus*[53] have mentally derailed and are side-tracking and misleading the entire world. Right now I doubt even Gautama Buddha. Buddha might

have had an illusion of himself as having realized Truth and misled humanity,' he said bluntly.

Ramana Padananda was taken aback, dumbfounded. He kept quiet and did not argue any more. How could anyone argue with a man who had uprooted all spiritual pursuit?

Was he an atheist, an agnostic or a logician? Was he a revolutionary extremist? Ramana Padananda could not fathom the philosophical depths of Krishna. What platform was he standing on? How he could go into such deep depths at such a young age was beyond Ramana Padananda's comprehension. He could only guess that some disappointment and distrust engulfed him which led to this type of recalcitrant behavior toward tradition. This demoralization might be a temporary phase; and such aberrations are quite common among Truth seekers. This phase might not last long. Ramana Padananda strongly wished to bring Krishna back into the spiritual fold.

Ramana Padananda visited him currently toward that end. He said, 'For the last few months I wanted to tell you about something important. Today, I came to you to talk about it.'

'Tell me what it is; why do you hesitate?' asked Krishna with a broad smile leaving the book in his hand on the table.

'You might have heard Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi in Tiruvannamalai?'

'Yes, I have. What about him?'

'I would like you to visit him. With him you may get the answers for all your doubts and disbeliefs. If you have faith, there will be the desired response.'

Strangely, Krishna remained silent. 'A passionate person like you with purity of mind and honesty should surely see such a great sage. Try to go there and have his *darsan,*' said Ramana Padananda.

After heaving a sigh, Krishna said, 'Why do you ask me to roam around hermitages like going on a merry-go-round? Have I not already emphatically told you that they are the resorts for deluded people? I heard the same things from all the gurus. No one had personal knowledge. They quote hackneyed phrases from dead literature. What is the use of meeting persons who do not have real substance? Sweet words do not solve problems.'

'No, no, you are thoroughly mistaken. Ramana Maharshi is not mediocre. He is an incarnation of S*atchidananda*, a *brahmajnani*[54] true to the word. He is an epitome of self-knowledge. His mere physical presence is in itself proof of the Infinite Brahman and is an unfailing source of inspiration. He is in an "immersed" state of being all the time; he is a manifestation of Absolute Truth,' Ramana Padananda stopped to watch Krishna's reactions. Krishna listened attentively.

'A number of aspirants who are in search of truth come to him from the four corners of the earth irrespective of their spiritual backgrounds. His divine presence brought about transformation and radical progress in their quest. Maharshi is a precious divine gift to mankind. I wholeheartedly wish you would see such a Vedic sage once,' concluded Ramana Padananda in a persuasive manner.

Krishna's rebellious nature refused to recognize the supremacy of anyone in the spiritual realm. After a while he said, 'No guru has the magic wand to cast a spell on me. No one wields a spiritual scepter. I strongly think so.'

Total silence fell on the room surrounded by some outside noise. Krishna pondered a while and blinking his eyes several times he continued:

'Every great ascetic and yogi from the Vedic times on says one and same thing: "Work hard. Continue your search and you will have varied experiences, delirious ecstasies, and supremely blissful moments. The experiences won't last long. To have them permanently you must continue your effort." They are like mirages and mythical golden deer. People run after them and they run away faster, enticing with their glittering colors to follow them. They appear and disappear and tempt in an illusory manner. You will be chasing them for the rest of your life. These exercises are like a dog running around in circles chasing its own tail. They are nothing but games of hide and seek. I released myself from their grip and domination. Now there is no need for me to go over to the Maharshi. Why are you forcing me to make a trip?' His words were calm and gentle, coming as it were from the depths of his heart.

The open window brought a whiff of joss sticks' fragrance probably from the house next-door. Two little sparrows flew over inside and stood on the window sill and started to trill. After a few seconds they suddenly left.

Ramana Padananda continued in his turn: 'Ramana Maharshi does not preach any thing and he proffers nothing. He does not give initiations. He asks you to ask yourself the question, "Who am I?" Find out that "I". Search for its roots and find them. Maharshi maintains an oceanic silence. In his eternal silence all doubts and questions are answered or dissolved.' He spoke convincingly.

Krishna smiled heartily and said, 'When I was fourteen I went to Rishikesh. There, for years together, I repeated to myself "I am not this," "I am not that," "I am Sachidananda," "I am self–luminescent," and so on. I finally got disgusted and left. All this seems to me like repeating to yourself, "I am not hungry," "I am not hungry." Will my real hunger go away by such repetitions? They are all empty phrases. I am sorry, nothing convinces me. I question everything.'

Ramana Padananda felt that there was no use arguing with such an adamant person. He handed over a book which he brought with him. 'Please read this carefully. I will see you again later,' so saying, he left.

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The British journalist and seeker of Truth Paul Brunton toured the whole of India and met a number of *tantriks*, yogis, fakirs, *babas* and other interesting people. Finally, he met the head of the Kanchi Kamakoti Matha, Sri Sankaracharya Swami. The Swami recognized the spiritual thirst in Brunton and addressed him: 'Please see Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi at Tiruvannamalai; your search for Truth will become fruitful. He is your destined Guru.' So saying, he blessed him.

Paul Brunton whose original name was Raphael Hurst came to India from England to study occultism in depth. He spent a few years at the Theosophical Society in Adyar. Later, in search of mystics he traveled the country visiting different mystics reported to have supernatural powers. Following Sankaracharya's advice, he proceeded to Tiruvannamalai.

In the presence of Maharshi he had mind-boggling experiences. He was purified by the spiritual ambience.

He later wrote: 'When I met Maharshi for the first time and saw him, I could not turn my looks away from him. I was spellbound by his looks. His presence radiated some power. When he gazed at me, my mind, which had been continuously troubling, became calm. The silent impression of Maharshi on my mind has become permanent. While traveling I prepared a number of questions for two hours to ask him. As soon as I saw him, all my questions disappeared.'

Brunton published a book, *A Search in Secret India*. In it, he wrote elaborately about his experiences in the presence of Maharshi. This was the first time such experiences had happened to a Westerner.

As soon as the book was published, there was a great commotion and impact in India and abroad. A number of intellectuals, thinkers, humanists, philosophers, scholars and other ardent seekers desirous of knowing the meaning of life started to visit Tiruvannamalai to see Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. Never did this happen before.

Later, the Maharshi became renowned as an unparalleled *Sadguru*[55]. The famous novelist Somerset Mangham visited him and later wrote his famous novel *The Razor's Edge*. The noted Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung also visited him. So did people from various parts of the world and from different religious backgrounds. He had become a spiritual icon.

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After a week, curious to know the reaction of Krishna to the book he had lent him and its possible impact on him, Ramana Padananda visited him one early morning. The sky was cloudless. The towering trees in Adyar stood in different and infinitely delicate contours smooching the blue sky. There was fresh warmth in the air. Birds were lazily hovering in the sky. A monkey family perched on the top of a tree inside the premises was jumping and jostling.

Across the road tramcars clattered and baby taxi cabs darted in and out. A vendor carried a long pole at the end of which were clustered scores of inflated multi-colored balloons looking like big flowers.

Ramana Padananda walked into the house. Krishna was alone in his room typing a letter. He wore a white long coat and looked like a Maharaja. On seeing Ramana Padananda he stopped his work, invited him in and offered him a seat.

'Well, I read Brunton's book thoroughly; in particular, the chapter on Ramana Maharshi,' so saying Krishna became quiet. Ramana Padananda was anxious to know what Krishna would say next.

Pushing back his hair with his fingers and adjusting his throat, Krishna said 'All experiences, however profound or marvelous, are relative, not absolute; hence they need to be questioned. Experiences differ from man to man. One must not take another's experiences as his guide, as they are accentuated and exaggerated by that person's fancy. Such experiences are mental visions which I had tasted long ago. I discarded them as shallow. You would feel as if they are real. They get reflected on the mind and the mind is tempted by them. They cause unimaginable mental intoxication and they unveil new worlds. It is not wise to give them credence. It is mere foolishness and tomfoolery to think that something is achieved by them.'

Krishna stopped and after a pause, watching Ramana Padananda closely, he continued: 'These experiences are like rain water bubbles. They travel along with the flow attractively. But the next moment they disappear and mix with the water. Let me put one straight question to you. What is the basic cause of these experiences? What is the mind? Where is the mind located? In my view, every experience should be squeezed for its essence. Then what remains? Can thirst be quenched by dew? What do you say, Swamiji?' Hearing this, Ramana Padananda was stunned. He was momentarily speechless. How to comprehend this young man and see what he was up to? He did not know what to say. However, he was determined to push further and present his point of view. Finally, he pleaded in a cajoling manner, 'I know you have your own way of looking at things. Now, it is proved beyond doubt that you are a cut above the rest. However, you must not belittle everything. Relax your logical stubbornness a bit. I beseech you to visit Maharshi once and let me know of your experience and impressions. That is enough for me. I will be eager to know your personal opinion of Maharshi.' Krishna kept quiet for some time. He pondered deeply. Something in him goaded him to comply with the request.

'As you have been persuading me so much, I will honor your word and go to Tiruvannamalai,' he said in a decisive manner.

Ramana Padananda was very much pleased by these words. He got up from his chair, ready to go. Returning his book, Krishna said clearly, 'I am going there tomorrow. Anyhow, thank you for you visit.' Ramana Padananda bid goodbye and left.

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The next day, Krishna promptly left Madras for Tiruvannamalai carrying his briefcase and reached the abode of Maharshi, which was surrounded by one of the most ancient mountain ranges in the world.

He darted slowly amidst the chirping and cooing of birds, the morning breeze scented with the first kiss of the sun and the wild plants just opening their petals. He was looking at the emerald landscape of the mountains and the flight of birds going eastward in search of food. Some monkey families occupied their usual place on treetops and hillocks watching people.

By the time he went inside the *ashram* pundits were reciting the Vedas, the sound reverberating in the hills. There were a number of cottages for the visitors. Krishna had his bath and changed his clothes.

He entered the hall where many devotees had already assembled and looked around. He sat quietly in the Western corner of the hall. Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi was seated in the hall and some people were meditating. Krishna closely observed the Maharshi and his demeanor. The whole atmosphere was serene, sacred and seized with an inexplicable tranquility.

Maharshi was of medium height, oval-faced with closely cropped hair, salt and pepper and a stubbly-bushy mustache. He looked remote with unfathomable eyes. They were perpetually gazing into the infinite doors of eternity. His face was emanating a subtle spiritual glow. His whole being was as transparent as crystal and as delicate as the wings of a fly. All mysteries of the universe were shrouded within his being. A perfectly flawless spiritual model, nature conceived the idea of making something special which he was. He inspired awe and admiration.

There were questions from the audience out of which only a few were answered; the rest were blatantly ignored in a non-communicative way. His looks, purity of words and gestures had a thousand one nuances. He looked a perfect example of the Biblical saying, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.'

A bell rang from the dining hall. Maharshi ate his meal along with all the others. Nothing special was served him. After the lunch and a short siesta, he returned to the hall. Except for a loin cloth, he wore no clothing. He was seated in the *padmasana* posture. He looked like a statue carved out of a rock. He was unruffled and unconcerned by the din in the hall. When Maharshi sat his stomach showed three folds.

Krishna observed keenly and laughed within himself: 'Will this man wearing a loincloth with three stomach-folds show me the path to salvation? What a wonderful ascetic!'

Some devotes in the hall were in meditation and others were keenly gazing at him. He was not looking at anyone in particular. He sat silently, as if silence was the *sumum bonum* of his being. He was the embodiment of an enigmatic and unfathomable silence.

But devotees felt that in that silence he held a light that could lead a person's soul from darkness to higher realms.

After some time, Maharshi got up, went to the kitchen, observed their work and made a few enquires. He participated in the cutting of vegetables for a while and then returned to the hall. By that time the mail containing some letters and books was delivered. He read some of the letters in detail and browsed through some Tamil periodicals. After that, in his usual way, he sat silently. He was gazing at the "vista of eternal nothingness".

Krishna spent many hours in the presence of Maharshi. Three hours had elapsed after lunch. The doubts and questions in his mind were all there bothering him as ever. He did not feel any influence or impact of Maharshi on him. It was said that there would be immense peace in Maharshi's presence. But clearly Krishna did not experience any such feeling.

Suddenly Maharshi focused his attention on Krishna. He gazed deeply. After a few minutes he turned his looks elsewhere. Again he cast glances from time to time at Krishna when Krishna was observing something else, but when Krishna turned his eyes toward him, he would glance in a different direction again. This hide and seek game went on for a few moments. Never were both of their looks fixed on each other.

It was said that Maharshi's looks went deep into a person's inner being and removed all of his or her doubts. Mental metamorphoses would occur, thereby suggesting new paths for thinking, new means to explore, and subsequently the life of the individual would change radically. It was thought that the individual gazing at Maharshi would experience something like a flow of electric current from top to toe.

But the looks of Maharshi did not have any effect on Krishna. His mental condition was unchanged.

Had he come all the way to sit here in front of Maharshi like a sand bag without any interaction? From the silence of Maharshi he did not receive any message in any form. It was said that 'Silence is the highest way of spiritual initiation (*mauna diksha*).' But there were no ripples in him. Krishna pondered for some time and decided to talk to Maharshi face-to-face. He had a working knowledge of Tamil.

After a while, breaking the silence in the air, Krishna asked Maharshi enquiringly, 'Swami, are there any steps and parts to reach the "state of being" of liberation?' Maharshi replied after a pause: 'For such a state there are neither steps nor parts. If it is there, it is absolute and complete. If not, nothing is there. That's all.'

'Swami, can you give to me what you have?' Krishna posed a second question. Maharshi stared at him strangely for a moment and maintained a strong silence. It was also believed that the silent look of Maharshi was like the stroke of an arrow, powerful, potent and deep, and that it would awaken the latent powers of an individual. The silence of Maharshi did not generate any pulsations in Krishna. Since Maharshi continued to be silent without any reaction, Krishna thought that the Maharshi might

not have heard his question. He repeated it a little more loudly. Maharshi gazed at Krishna piercingly and kept silent again. No immediate reply was given. Later Maharshi looked at him intently, knotting his eyebrows and replied slowly, 'Yes, I can give it, but can you take it?' posing a counter-question in an authoritative tone. They gazed into each other's eyes for the first time. The rest of the audience in the hall eagerly awaited Krishna's reaction: what would be the answer of this young boy who looked like a novice?

Upon hearing Maharshi's challenging tone, Krishna was stunned. He was anticipating a stock reply but it was not to be so. He kept quiet as he was speechless. His dogmatic confidence had received a rude shock, a big dent; his ego got punctured! So far, every one had been preaching and teaching, 'Continue your practice and meditation, do more and more of it, torture your body, strive with every nerve,' but no one had the temerity to hurl a challenge at Krishna in this manner.

Yes, indeed, it was a great challenge, 'I can give it but do you have the eligibility to receive it?' Maharshi implied a way with certitude and without ambiguity. Upon Krishna's stunned silence, the audience seemed to think, 'What do you think of yourself? You are unpolished and raw as a block of marble, rough hewn from a quarry. You need to be hammered, cut, carved and scraped to become a statue.'

If anyone else had asked him the same question would Maharshi give the same reply? He probably wouldn't. He might have said, 'You find out that state yourself.' Did Maharshi gauge the inner strength of Krishna? Did he act according to an individual's level of understanding and depth of personality?

Krishna was in shock. He did not give any reply because he was puzzled. Maharshi created a kind of internal jet which mounted to his heart and head. 'What is that state that I cannot take? Why did Maharshi doubt my credentials?'

That is to say, even if Maharshi gave it, there was a certain "enlightened state" which Krishna could not receive; so one should have the ability and eligibility to receive such state.

'What might be that state? If such a state does exist, how is it possible to reach it? What are its ins and outs?' Krishna's mind had a load of questions, but the basic question remained; only it became tougher and harder.

Maharshi then turned his looks away from Krishna and became silent as he always had been – the paradigm of enigmatic silence.

On the face of it, it looked like a gesture of no importance to others, but not so for Krishna. He posed a question to himself: 'Why did Maharshi doubt my credentials? This is truly a challenge!' It stirred him as a champion runner horse which dared to challenge.

'What is that state which I cannot take?' He dived deeply into his innards with that certitude which had augmented from a habitual indulgence in self-analysis and

dialectical reasoning. According to his self-estimation, he was quite sure: he did doggedly pursue everything written in the sacred scriptures; in turn, he had several mystical experiences in his own way; but he brutally rejected all of them without being enticed by them.

The day which began so curiously for Krishna ended with a challenge. That is to say, Maharshi created turmoil to fling him upon the surging waves of spiritual pursuits. Krishna's king-sized ego and bloated attitude were being put to test.

'Where shall I find a retreat to lay my anchor? Where shall I go?'

Krishna returned to Madras. After two days, Ramana Padananda showed himself. 'Come on in, sir. In fact, to day, I have been expecting you at any moment,' exclaimed Krishna.

He narrated in detail about his visit. 'When Maharshi posed a question by saying "I can give it to you, but can you take it?" you should have replied immediately, "Yes, certainly;" why did you keep quiet instead?' asked Ramana Padananda.

'How could I say that? I must first know the state of Maharshi and its depths, and only then can I say whether I am qualified or not.'

Ramana Padananda could not fathom the logic behind Krishna's replies. For traditional practitioners like him, logical doubts would not arise; they would rather pursue a path laid out for them. He kept silent.

After a while, Krishna added, 'Your Maharshi is also purely governed by tradition. His philosophical and spiritual contemplations are woven into a traditional garb. The old coins are simply given a polish. That is to say, "You are immature; you still have a long way to go; and you have to work harder. Perhaps not in this life, may be in the next one. You are not doing enough now." Is this not a traditional approach?'

Ramana Padananda was surprised at Krishna's sharp criticism of Maharshi who had been a centripetal force for all the Hindu spiritual lore. He thought to himself that probably Krishna was born to doubt, question and bitterly criticize one and all. Who could tame an impudent and obstinate horse?

After a few minutes he left. Whenever he visited thereafter, he never discussed any spiritual matters.

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Krishna reviewed his visit to the Maharshi in a leisurely manner. He might have rejected Maharshi as a rank traditionalist but he never doubted or questioned his state of being. Apart from the genuine qualities of a yogi, there was something extraordinary in him.

'What might be that state which I cannot receive?' This had become the new question for Krishna. 'There are no new practices for me to follow; I have delved into the inner

depths of all practices. I have had a number of spiritual experiences. They mean nothing to me. There are no great teachings for me to learn. One thing is certain: that state, if it is really there, it cannot be obtained from dead literature, imaginary creations or by some outside agency. If at all, a chance may occur. But how? Is there really an "Absolute Truth"? Is it the aim of man to reach that state? How can it be determined and proved beyond doubt? The Holy Scripture says, "Truth is that by knowing which all else becomes known."'

He was not looking for the golden scarab with a message under its wing. There was no magic formula. However, he had to prove to himself, not to the world, that the Absolute state of being did exist. 'That state of being of Maharshi might be limited to him. It cannot be taken for granted by me unless I tasted it. Why should I not doubt Maharshi? He might have had a mental illusion or some sort of spiritual hallucination. There are innumerable people who deceive themselves and in turn deceive others saying that they have attained that state of being.'

'Now I am questioning even the Buddha, Jesus, Mahavira and others; they are said to have attained Self-Realization. Does such a thing really exist?' Krishna nurtured such doubts.

'Let me assume for a moment that such a state of being does actually exist. For that I shall strive with every nerve to discover it for myself. In this process I shall face hurdles, interruptions and bottlenecks of many kinds. Come what may, with perseverance and dogged determination, I shall go ahead.'

A vast number of people invariably wish to travel along a route which all others have been traveling in an assured manner. That is a safe bet. There is no element of risk whatsoever. For such people a familiar beaten track is readily available.

A handful of people, who had tried variegated and filtered-down spiritual pursuits, never hesitate to dash into the arena like a Roman gladiator to face any danger by traveling the unfrequented path. They crave for sublime and subtle thrills along the way by exploring new horizons and touching mysterious chords. They are determined to write their own script and carve out their own niche.

Krishna belonged exactly to this clan. He accepted the challenge thrown at him and took up the gauntlet.

* * *

19. The Bother of Examinations

The next day Krishna returned to Machilipatnam from Madras. All his debating society friends assembled at one place. They discussed the current topics. After some time, Krishna spoke seriously, 'It seems to me that our debating society is not performing up to the mark. A spark is missing. Any society or organization should not depend upon an individual. It is a collective responsibility. You have to work conscientiously and generate your own resources. I am always available for support, wherever I may be. Any failure on our part reflects on youth's power. So keep our flag flying!'

When he came to his house Krishna ran into a gentleman; the two got into a conversation. After a while the man said, 'Krishna, I am now starting a new business. I need a boy for part-time work. Can you suggest someone? If he works diligently, the job may become permanent.'

Krishna replied, 'Yes, I will recommend to you a gem of a boy. But he is a poor Harijan. Do you have any objection?'

'Why should I?'

'Then we will come and see you in the evening.'

Venkata Rao was given the job. Krishna said to him: 'Look Venkat, it's only a modest beginning. You can gain experience by interacting with people. One more thing: do not discontinue your studies. Work for Banaras Matric and I will provide you the necessary funds. Keep in touch with me.' Venkata Rao thanked him profusely.

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Krishna wrote a letter to George Arundale, the President of the Theosophical society, complaining that the idea of examinations to asses a student's performance with 35% as passing marks was totally mistaken; in fact, these examinations, he said, decimated individual creativity. He quoted someone in his letter to the effect that 'All these examinations are intended to polish pebbles and dull diamonds.' On receiving the letter from Krishna, Arundale wrote in reply on 10th July 1939, supporting his ideas:

'Thank you for your letter dated July 8th. I quite realize that examinations are a great nuisance, and indeed, are of extremely little worth. But one has to go through them for the sake of equipment from the standpoint of the outer. We were very glad to have you here in the office and hope to see you again when you are next in Madras.'

Krishna was elated that Arundale himself had supported his viewpoint. Thus the subject-matter for the next debate became, "Is education killing the real spirit of the student or guiding him in any useful way?" Everyone subscribed to the view that education was important. Only Krishna opposed it. He spoke vehemently on how the rigmarole of education was thrust upon the student: 'He may opt for degrees to become a lawyer, a doctor or a business man for the sake of making a living. It is merely a process of deliberate training to earn a livelihood. This system of education is

obviously superficial and artificial. Reflecting this sort of education we also live our lives superficially. Thus, we miss our inborn talents. This is how a story goes: when a successful surgeon of world-repute was asked, "Do you have any unfulfilled dreams you cherished so much?" he replied, "Since childhood my cherished dream was to become a carpenter. I would have become the best carpenter instead of a surgeon. Now I am cutting human bodies instead of wood."' Krishna paused and continued, 'I heard that a good football player was forced to learn automobile mechanics to earn his livelihood.' He then concluded emphatically, 'Anyone who has the resources to pursue his heart's desires is better off not going through a forced education. We can take the perfect example of the Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore. He never attended any school or college. Yet what he has achieved, no one in India has achieved so far.'

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The final examinations were fast approaching. As usual, Krishna managed his attendance in the college register by bribing the clerk. He never cared about or evinced any interest in college education; his attention was diverted to other matters, not to matters of the mundane world. He wrote a letter to George Arundale seeking his soothing support, for which Arundale replied on 10th February 1940: 'I myself have high hopes for you and I am always glad to see you at Adyar. I do hope you will pass your examination successfully.'

Without any serious preparation, as a sort of indispensable exercise he causally attended the examinations. Needless to say, he failed in all subjects except the languages of Telugu and English. He never regretted this; on the contrary, he was quite composed. Again be wrote a letter to George Arundale about his failure and received a prompt reply.

On 20th May 1940, Arundale wrote: 'I am so sorry you have failed in your examination again. Some of us are not really fit for examinations. We can do other and better things, and if you have an income which will suffice, then why should you not follow your own inclinations and study along your own lines. For my part, I should not think it is necessary for you to have a university career.' Krishna was pleased to learn that Arundale held the same views on education as he did.

After returning from Ramanashram, Krishna's probing and logical mind took a spawning turn. No doubt Krishna had rejected Maharshi's traditional style of functioning, but not his challenging question thrown at him. The one and only question goading and grinding him time and again was, 'What is that state of being which I cannot take?' He made up his mind to search for the answer, come what may, in his spiritual journey.

When a seeker gropes in the dark some sort of intuition or instinct operates to guide him. At this juncture Krishna needed a spiritual friend who could share his mental churnings. In spite of his total abhorrence of gurus, for some reason or other he was searching for some genuine person in his "searchless search" to be his guru or master. He thought he could share his inner turmoil with Jinarajadasa. He wrote a lengthy

letter to him in London delineating his aims and aspirations based on the tenets of Theosophy. He received following reply:

C. Jinarajadasa
Cables: Blavatsky, London
Telegram: Blavatsky London
Telephone: Kensington 8346

Dear Brother,

33 Ovington Square
London Sw3

12th July 1940

I can only reply briefly to your letter of appreciation and enquires.

It is excellent that you should have the ideals which you have of being of service, but you can work out a great part of the problem before you in the light of the many teachings which you find in Theosophy.

Regarding the matter of your desiring to find a teacher, I might here quote the answer which the Master K.H gave to the late Bro. C.W.L., who asked that question of the Master in 1883:

> To accept any man as a *chela* does not depend on my personal will. It can only be the result of one's personal merit and exertions in that direction. Force any one of the "Masters" you may happen to choose; do good works in his name and for the love of mankind; be pure and resolute in the path of righteousness (as laid out in our rules); be honest and unselfish; forget yourself but remember the good of other people – and you will have forced that "Master" to accept you.

The hymn of Frances Havergel is often used by me to explain to my hearers certain aspects of the great ideal.

When I return to India, I can meet you; I can give you further advice. In the meantime, look within yourself for the guidance which you think you need. You will find that if you are in a quiet state of meditation, with a feeling for others, put it into operation even if the result seems not noticeable. But remember the teaching of the Gita that you must have no thought of fruit or reward, but act righteously because that is a law of your own being or because it is an offering form your heart to God.

Yours sincerely,
C. Jinarajadasa

Krishna read this thought-provoking letter several times.

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Krishna appeared for the Intermediate Examination again. In spite of his lackadaisical attitude and ennui, surprisingly, he passed all the subjects at one stretch. Pantulu was jubilant as his grandson clambered a main hurdle to higher education.

After passing, Krishna immediately flashed a letter to Arundale. Arundale replied promptly on 23rd October 1940: 'I am very delighted to hear that you have passed the examination. This is very good news. I offer you my very affectionate congratulations.'

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20. First Journey to Foreign Lands

Pantulu had a keen desire to send his grandson for higher education so that he could be recognized in society; unfortunately, he and his grandson had an antagonistic relationship. And everyone in the household knew that Krishna had an aversion for education.

However, for a long time, Krishna had been nurturing a secrete desire to go abroad and broaden his horizons. The idea was implanted in him in 1926 when he was very young and happened to see J. Krishnamurti in Bezawada. Now it had sprouted up again. In a word, he now had an obsession for travel.

Krishna conveyed his wish to study abroad to Pantulu. Pantulu was flush with excitement. Durgamma's happiness too was boundless. She prayed to God earnestly for the success of her grandson's foreign trip. Krishna's friends congratulated him.

Krishna hurried to prepare for his trip to London. He went to Guntur to meet Dr. P. Srinivasachari who had received his Doctorate in London and discussed with him his idea in detail.

Krishna resolutely sallied forth looking ahead in a triumphant mood. He went to Madras, withdrew large amounts of money from the Imperial Bank of India and converted it into dollars at the exchange rate of 3.50 rupees per U.S. dollar. He made his travel arrangements with Thomas Cook to go from Madras to London by steamer via Ceylon. Three days later, he embarked the steamer at the Madras port and arrived in Ceylon. After a brief sojourn there, the steamer traveled through Port Said, Alexandria and Malta. Krishna thoroughly enjoyed the sea journey watching alien lands and peoples. It was a new experience. At last, after traveling for three weeks, he reached the port of London from where he boarded a train to the heart of London City. He went to the Theosophical Society, introduced himself and stated the purpose of his visit. Very soon he was befriended by many young people. They promised to help him in any way he needed. But U.G. never liked to be dependent on others; he wanted to do everything by himself. The Society merely gave him accommodation there.

He visited Oxford University and obtained the application forms for admission. He also went to Cambridge and put in his application for admission.

Then he went on a site-seeing spree. London was thoroughly sprinkled with mementos of Queen Victoria's long reign and each of them bespoke the grandeur of the British Empire, the horizon-breaking quest for knowledge and its expansion to an empire in which the sun had never set. U.G. visited Mayfair which was filled with fine mansions, walked around Berkeley square, North Audrey Street and in the straight streets in between. He admired their noble proportions. Later, he passed through the Admiralty Arch facing Trafalgar Square, Buckingham palace and Hyde Park. Then he visited many interesting places such as the Thames River, the Victoria and Albert Museums, and the Natural History Museum in Kensington. He spent a few more days site-seeing and watched interesting stage plays.

After some time, U.G enquired about admissions at Oxford and Cambridge; for some reason or other he did not gain admission to either university. But he was not disappointed. Now he decided to tour the Continent as a tourist. The seed was planted for his peripatetic adventures. He had enough dollars to roam Europe. After a week of his ongoing journey, he touched Switzerland. He was awestruck by its natural beauty. It was veritably a paradise on earth.

He came to Bern from Basel which was a medieval city. He stayed in a tourist hotel; a fine view of the snowy tops of the Alps greeted him. He went to Bern's famous clock-tower at the heart of the city which the Bernese called the Zytglogge. After this he went down the street lined with orchid arcades on either side and slowly reached the Cathedral. He gazed at the Alps from the Cathedral terrace down at the deep Aar ravine at his feet. The Aar is the longest and noblest river in Switzerland. Originating in a glacier, it cuts through gorges, flows through two lakes and sweeps through Bern.

After a few days in Bern, Krishna started out fresh one morning by train for Interlaken. He watched the Alps with their piercing snowcaps, an irresistible magnet. U.G. now entered the famous region of the Bernese Oberland, the highlands of the Canton of Bern packed full of resorts. Krishna traveled by car to the town of Thun located where the River Aar rushes clear as crystal out of a beautiful long lake. There was a magnificent view of the Alps across the lake. Halfway down the lake is Spiez, a beautiful town. At the end of the lake U.G rejoined the Aar River and entered Interlaken. It was a new city in Switzerland which served as a center for travelers wishing to tour the High Alps. U.G. thus visited beautiful valleys and lakes of the Bernese Oberland region and other interesting sites. The next day, he stumbled upon the area of the Saanen Valley, one of the beautiful sports of the Oberland.

Krishna resolved to himself, 'This is the place where I want to live my whole life.' He had no clue how this wishful thinking could materialize.

At the end of his journey, he reached Zurich, Switzerland's metropolis and business center. He reached there from Lucerne by car. For some strange reason, U.G wanted to open a bank account there. He never imagined that this account would become a pivotal point in his future life.
Krishna finally returned to London. After a couple of days of rest, he traveled back to Madras by Steamer via Ceylon. This foreign junket provided him with the most enchanting experiences and an inexplicable impetus, a kind of new awareness, and also served as a prologue to his future world travels.

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21. Theosophical Training

It was customary in the Theosophical Society to refer to the names of important persons by their initials instead of by their full names. Even the Theosophical Society was called T.S., and Esoteric Society, E.S. Annie Besant was referred to as A.B. and Charles Webster Leadbeater as C.W.L. In the Society there were many people with the given name of Krishnamurti. So Jiddu Krishnamurti was first called 'K', later J.K. and finally Krishnaji. C. Jinarajadasa was referred to as C.J. and George Sydney Arundale as G.S.A. Tummalapalli Gopala Krishna Murty was called T.G.K. Jinarajadasa began to refer to Uppaluri Gopala Krishnamurti as U.G.K and later the name became settled as U.G. From then on Krishna had been called U.G.

U.G. gained recognition by participating in different activities of the Theosophical Society. Whatever work was assigned to him, he completed diligently and whole-heartedly, in his own way, receiving compliments from everyone around him. He was the beam of guiding light for the youth.

Important people with different backgrounds from various countries participated in the activities of the Society. Many bigwigs from different parts of India also visited there. U.G. was thrilled to work with them enthusiastically. By nature U.G would not recognize the greatness of anyone in any field. But he had three great stalwarts before him as ideals and they had inspired him.

Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer was the first man. He was an intellectual giant of a rare kind, well known for his skills in criticism. His audiences were always spellbound by his prolific and fluent speeches. He was a multifaceted genius who could speak in English fluently on any topic.

Another person was Jinarajadasa, the Buddhist from Sri Lanka (Ceylon). He was a polyglot and a great scholar. He could speak lucidly in fourteen languages.

The third person was Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. He was a great scholar and a topnotch philosopher. He could speak fluently and commandingly with a unique style of his own. He was noble, humble and majestic in his demeanor.

U.G. had been aspiring to achieve such all-round abilities some day. But there were many ladder-steps to climb, many hurdles to overcome and many skills to acquire, to gain recognition as a top-level scholarly expounder. With that aim in view, he had been working on improving himself.

* * *

In 1916, Pantulu constructed a building for the Theosophical Society at the centre of the town of Gudiwada. The building was named Krishna Nivas. For a number of years, meetings, discussions and seminars had been organized there. Since it happened to be at the centre of the town and because of increased population and noise, the activities there faced a number of inconveniences and disturbances.

To solve the problem, Pantulu thought of constructing another building with all the modern facilities in about a three-quarters acre of land in his fields on the outskirts of the town.

U.G. came to know of it and vehemently opposed the idea: 'It's wasteful to construct another building in this town spending large amounts of savings. I think you'll do better to construct such a building in Adyar. It will serve a useful purpose. Moreover, you'll have better recognition.'

'I don't make any decisions thoughtlessly or suddenly. But how is it useful for me if I construct a building in Adyar? If I don't, someone else will build one there. Here in Gudiwada, no one except me will come forward. My satisfaction is more important to me. Here I can visit it whenever I want, at my convenience. And I can improve it in my own way,' answered Pantulu.

'With due respects for your feelings, I am awfully sorry to say, it's a foolish idea to sink money in another building here,' said U.G.

Pantulu stood his ground firmly. Some arguments ensued. Finally U.G Said, 'All right, it's your money and it's your choice. But one thing I can predict: there will not be anyone to look after it after you. Petty people will use it for their own selfish ends. All the hoopla and enthusiasm will end in ruins.'

With surprising looks, Pantulu questioned, 'How could that be? You will be there to take over. Don't you have any responsibility to look after it?' U.G. responded immediately, 'I am very sorry to say a big no.' 'Why?' Pantulu asked. 'Well, my mission and path are different. It is impossible for me to spend my life caring for the building and supervising the activities here,' U.G. replied. Pantulu concealed his disappointment within himself. After a long pause, he said, 'If the desire is right, it will succeed.'

An auspicious moment was fixed and the necessary prayers, including *Bhoomi Puja,*[56] were performed on the new site in a traditional manner. A foundation stone was laid. Pantulu personally looked after the construction and the building with a number of rooms was completed as planned.

A separate large room was allotted to the Esoteric Section. The Library room was equally big. On the right side of the building, U.G. had a room built for him exclusively. Some rooms with amenities were allotted to guests. The new well in the precinct was full of water. Two iron gates in the front were erected. A number of trees were planted around the building.

The building was completed and was called "Theosophical Lodge" in English and "Paravidyashram" in Telugu.

Pantulu planned a grand opening ceremony. He asked U.G to make the necessary arrangements. U.G. personally invited Arundale and his wife Rukmini. He prevailed

upon Jinarajadasa to grace the occasion. Other important people of the Society were also invited.

After the ceremony, cultural events were scheduled. U.G. arranged for the performance of a hilarious satire called *Modern Ramayana* written by Malladi Ramakrishna Sastry and a character-acting session.

As he had invited Jinarajadasa and Rukmini Arundale specially to be guests at his house, he had two rooms modified to suit their needs and ordered a special chair and a teapot for each.

Invitations were printed and posted to different Theosophical Lodges in the Circar districts. The Principal of the Hindu College, Dr. P. Srinivasachari and the eminent translator, Somanchi Linga Raju of Eluru, were specially invited.

All the streets leading to the Theosophical Lodge were decorated on either side with colorful paper cutouts. The premises were adorned with strings of green mango leaves and festoons. Plantain trunks with broad leaves were placed on either side of the gates.

Invitees from all the districts and local dignitaries were present at the function. Jinarajadasa and Rukmini Arundale arrived a day earlier than expected; and George Arundale and N. Sriram could not attend.

On the 12th February 1941 at 10.30 am, the Paravidyashram building was opened formally by Jinarajadasa. Pantulu arranged for the recitation of sacred literature such as the Vedas and Upanishads. He instituted "Durgamma Trust" in the name of his wife. Another ardent Theosophist, Ramachandra Rao, provided a library for the Lodge in the name of Rangamma. It was said that, like the libraries in Adyar and Rajahmundry, this library had a number of invaluable ancient books such as *Bhavishyad Puranam.*

The inaugural address of Jinarajadasa was translated into Telugu by Somanchi Linga Raju. Among other things, Jinarajadasa said in his address: '...We are happy that he (T.G.K.) is continuing his legacy in the Society by introducing his grandson U.G. Krishnamurti – we call him as U.G. We ardently hope that U.G. will represent the youth and follow the footsteps of his grandfather for the amplification of the Theosophical Society in his own way.' He concluded his long speech to a thundering applause from the huge audience.

Vemuri Narasimha Rao who came from Machilipatnam photographed the proceedings.

After the character-acting of Appa Rao, as a finale, the hilarious *Modern Ramayana* was performed under the direction of U.G. Venkatasubbaiah acted the role of Dasaratha, and Kameswara Rao and Satyanarayana the roles of Vasishta and Sri Rama, respectively. The local youth played the other roles.

Here are a couple of examples of the humor in the play:

Vasishta asks, 'Dasaratha, you are a hen-pecked husband and you drove your own sons to the forest. Until now they have been enjoying princely pleasures here. How can they eat in the forest?' Dasaratha replies 'Don't worry; I have received information that Tamilians come over to the forest and established restaurants. So, they can live by eating *idli* (steamed rice cake) and *dosa* (pancake). They will not be having any problem finding food.'

Vasishta asks again, 'Your daughter–in-law, Sita, has not been exposed even to the sun. How can she walk on stony rugged paths in the forest?' Dasaratha replies, 'I also learned that there is a shoe store there and coaches are also available. She can walk wearing sandals, and if she is tired, she can travel by a coach.'

* * *

U.G. was back in Adyar. One day, he was typing a letter in his room. A messenger came and informed that Jinarajadasa wanted to see him. He got dressed and went to Raja's residence.

Jinarajadasa was alone and writing something seriously. On seeing U.G, he signed to him and said, 'Please be seated. I want to assign an important job to you. Please wait.'

U.G tried to guess what it was. After a few minutes, Raja completed the job on hand and looked at U.G. kindly. He said, 'You have to go to Santi Niketan and meet Rabindranath Tagore.'

U.G was pleasantly surprised on hearing the news. In 1901, Rabindranath Tagore established Santi Niketan. In 1913, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for his *Gitanjali*. He became well known in literary circles all over the world. In 1921, Santi Niketan was transformed into Viswa Bharati University. Creative people from different parts of the world and from all walks of life – artists, poets, musicians and dramatists – visited the university and a number of foreigners enrolled themselves in it to study. It represented the Indian soul. Incidentally, Tagore was also the Pro-chancellor of the World University which was run under the auspices of the Theosophical society.

U.G had a great regard and high appreciation for Tagore. He had read some of his books and, in fact, had a strong desire to see him personally. U.G. admired Tagore for his sincerity and honesty. What Tagore ardently believed he put into practice. He proved beyond doubt the power of the individual.

U.G. wondered why all of sudden Raja asked him to see Tagore. He felt thrilled and replied enthusiastically, 'Definitely, sir, I will go.' He would be representing the Society, which carried its own weight.

U.G. immediately prepared for the journey. He sent a telegram to his grandfather requesting him to meet him at the train station in Bezawada. Pantulu saw him there and was overjoyed at the prospective journey.

U.G reached Calcutta after three days, stayed in a hotel overnight and traveled by taxi to Santi Niketan, situated in Bolpur, a hundred miles away. He went to the visitor's room and informed that he came from the Theosophical Society in Madras and he was there to pay his respects to Tagore.

Tagore's health was delicate. He was resting in bed and met only a few visitors, that too by appointment only. However, he consented to see U.G.

After a few minutes, with the help of a walking stick, Tagore slowly emerged into the visitor's room like a fairy. U.G stood up and bowed to him in a most respectable manner. Tagore acknowledged his greeting by nodding.

U.G. introduced himself and conveyed the respects of Jinarajadasa to him. Tagore enquired about the activities of the Theosophical Society. U.G. answered by giving the details. Meanwhile a servant brought a cup of tea and placed before him on the table. Tagore signaled to him to take the tea. U.G. drank the tea and left the empty cup in a corner of the table.

Tagore wore a long coat. He had a long silvery bright beard. His face was brilliant and graceful. There was an indefinable peace surrounding him. He was shining like an occult yogi who had the gift of seeing even ordinary things as wonderful with his poetic vision. He was like an ancient saint who could speak about the entire world in a word or two, as if the ultimate aim of life was peeping through him. He was magnetic. U.G was spellbound in his presence.

Tagore glanced at U.G keenly with his inner eye. The demeanor of U.G impressed him. Silence pervaded the room. After some time, Tagore stood up and walked towards the almirah. He picked a copy of his *Collected Poems* from it, and gazing at U.G interestingly for a few moments, he inscribed the following lines in it:

> The shy little pomegranate bud
> Blushing today, behind the wheel
> Will burst forth into a passionate
> Flower tomorrow when I am awake

He inscribed his name on the book and presented it to U.G. U.G. was elevated and received it thankfully. Both of them were silent for a few moments.

U.G got up and said, 'I am very much thankful indeed to you, sir, for giving me an audience in spite of your ill health. I apologize for troubling you. My whole heart respects you for your august personality. Your presence gave me great enthusiasm and elevation. I can never forget your hearty reception. I shall ever preserve the memory of this meeting in my heart. My cherished dream came true.'

Tagore came out with U.G and U.G took leave of him in a humble manner. He came back to Calcutta by the same taxi and purchased there a marble idol of the Lord Buddha. The next day he left for Madras.

After returning to Madras, U. G. narrated the details of his trip to Jinarajadasa. One question remained unanswered in his mind: why did Jinarajadasa particularly ask U.G to visit Tagore?

* * *

U.G was on a busy schedule in the Society. He was determined to plunge himself heart and soul into Society's work.

To reward him, the Society appointed U.G. as the Joint General Secretary for the All India Federation of Young Theosophists. U.G represented the third generation of Theosophists. He was like a new tidal wave in the Society. Pantulu felt very happy to read the news about his grandson in the English periodical, the *Theosophist* and the Telugu periodical, *Divyajnana Dipika*. He had been dreaming to see his grandson as a true Theosophist and his dream had come true. This appointment gave U.G. a status and a position in the Society. His bond with the Society had become strengthened. A heavy responsibility had been placed on U.G. as a representative of the youth wing.

U.G. decided to conduct youth camps to awaken brotherhood among the youth who had different views and thinking styles and who hailed from different backgrounds.

It was decided to have the first camp in Gudiwada. U.G. personally went to Guntur to invite Dr. P. Srinivasachari to inaugurate the camp. U.G prepared a pamphlet about the camp and got it printed. The details of the program were yet to be decided. But the pamphlets were mailed to the invitees in Andhra districts.

"Youth Shall Reshape the World"
YOUTH CAMP
Gudiwada

Tuesday, 20th May 1941.

Object: To provide an opportunity for youth with different conceptions and different ideas to gather in this camp, partly that by meeting together, exchanging thoughts, sharing in feelings, partly that to link ourselves on the golden bonds of brotherhood.

CAMPING PLACE: The Theosophical Society Building (Paravidyashram). Dr. P. Srinivasachari, M.A., Ph.D. (London), will open the camp with an address.

SYMPOSIUM : Youth Looks at the New World
What are we going to make of it?
CHAIRMAN: Mr. U.G. Krishnamurti,
Joint General Secretary,
The All-India Federation of Young Theosophists.
SYMPOSIASTS: To be announced later.
CAMP FEES: (Including admission to the Entertainment and Tea) Four Annas[57].

Application for registration to be made to the Camp Organizers, accompanied by the camp fees. Copies of Camp's full program (now in the course of preparation) and further particulars can be obtained from:

Mr. Selaka Venkata Subbaiah
Mr. U.B.G. Sarma
Mr. R.V.Raghava Rao
Mr. T. Kameswara Rao

The Camp Organizers, Gudiwada.

Or from: The Theosophical Society, Gudiwada

U.G. never liked to postpone things or delay matters. He took decisions quickly to act as planned. A number of youth, particularly from Guntur, Bezawada, Machilipatnam and Eluru, took active part in the camp. The number of enthusiastic speakers became unwieldy and had to be cut short, which caused disappointment in some of them.

Dr. Srinivasachari said in his inaugural address:

> There are hidden energies in the youth. They should be brought to light and utilized for eradication of the age-old social evils which have been pestering the society. Only such youth power can play a prominent role to uplift the society. Youth should not waste their potentialities for unnecessary undertakings. So programs must be planned in which youth from different parts understand one another, properly express or exchange their views openly and work constructively for the welfare of the society. I wish that more camps like this shall be organized to encourage the youth.

The president of the meeting, U.G., spoke about "The Present Youth – Their Role in the Society". He said that a number of hurdles have to be faced by good programs:

> We should not get disturbed by them; we should not get weakened by them. In spite of the hurdles we have to be determined to face them boldly and go ahead with our new ideals and views. A conflict between the old and new views is inevitable. We shall develop the necessary strength and power to overcome such conflicts. The present social conditions are deplorable. Age-old moldy customs should be brushed aside and the society should be re-organized and re-oriented. Youth's life is what we make of it and we have to choose to make the best of it. We have to set our values and standards.
>
> Unless we get rid of the old how can we usher the new? So great responsibility is vested with all of us and we shall guide the rest. Simply having degrees and spending lives, having some jobs will not be fruitful. You have sole authority on your life, none else. You are the master of your own destiny. We have to mold ourselves according to high ideals. Freedom of choice rests upon us. What we have to achieve is much more than that we have achieved. There should never be a disagreement between what we say and what we do. We shall practice what

> we actually believe. This core honesty should always be reflected in the youth. We should not believe anything blindly. Let us think for ourselves, using our minds, depending upon our own experiences. Let us be work-oriented. With honesty and purity of heart alone can we carry the society forward with us.

U.G. spoke at length in English for half an hour and infused new energy in the youth. At the end of the program of the camp cultural activities were organized. There was a detailed report about the camp in *Divyajnana Dipika.* U.G. was congratulated for successfully organizing the program.

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22. Forays into Higher Education

Pantulu tried to persuade his grandson time and again to go for higher education. Though he was not quite willing, U.G. tried reluctantly for admission in Madras University. Since he had completed his Intermediate after failing a number of times, he could not get a seat easily. U.G. patiently tried for it at several institutions, but to no avail. At last, there were indications that he might get a seat in the Philosophy Department. There was a reason for it: that year very few people joined the Department – by that time only four were enrolled. There were no indications that the number might increase. U.G. did get a seat in the B.A. (Hons.) course in Philosophy. There was a prevalent impression among the populace that philosophy was a dud subject, that only rich people opted for this course as a pastime and that it had no practical value in day-to-day life.

U.G. paid the college fees and joined the course. As usual he was not attentive in the class. The total number of students in the class was five. U.G. attended the college for half a day, whenever he felt like it, just to pass the time. Professor T.M.P. Mahadevan used to comment rather sarcastically, 'There are five of you. But if U.G. comes for half a day, he is absent for the rest of the day. So you are only four and half students.'

For Mahadevan U.G. was the "Chosen One" among students. Often they used to discuss a number of philosophical issues. U.G.'s philosophical thirst, individuality, his immense knowledge, fluency in expression and logical presentation attracted the Professor. The Professor was a great scholar in the subject of Advaita Vedanta. He wrote a number of books and was renowned in India and abroad.

Questions and doubts which did not occur even to senior students were flashing in U.G.'s mind. He argued like a logician. He raised many basic questions and was demanding proofs. Mahadevan was extremely pleased with and proud of U.G.'s originality.

On that day, while going through the *Hindu* newspaper, U.G. came across the news that Viswakavi Rabindranath Tagore had passed away on the previous day, 7th August 1941. U.G. recalled his brief encounter with Tagore and his imposing personality.

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Psychology was one of the subjects in the Philosophy Honours course. Besides reading the prescribed texts in psychology, U.G. had also read works of eminent psychoanalysts such as Freud, Jung, Adler and Rank.

In his reading of these books U.G. encountered a number of questions, chiefly concerning the status of the mind: 'What is the mind?' It was the same question that U.G. had raised while he was still a young boy, before he had read any books.

'They say that the mind creates heaven and hell, happiness and sorrow in human life. Where is the mind located? What are its characteristics? What are its identification marks? Is mind the basic and pivotal cause of all human activities, thought processes

and functions? Does it have an independent existence apart from the body? Is the mind more than the brain? Does it have a special non-physical existence with brain as its basis? Where is the mind located? Is there actually a mind at all?' These were all unanswered questions for U.G.

A central concept of psychology is consciousness. U.G. had unending doubts concerning this notion. 'When people are awake, is it merely their superficial consciousness that operates in their day-to-day life? Are there a number of layers underneath it? Is there anything which is not known or which cannot be known about consciousness?

U.G. delved into the depths of the theories of Freud, Jung and Adler and pondered over them, but he could not get logical and satisfactory answers to his questions.

'Do these books contain real and original knowledge or are they merely the products of the imagination of the authors?' U.G. did not like generalizations and speculative theories.

One day, U.G. asked his Psychology Professor, Dr. Boas, in the classroom: 'Sir, I want a straight answer from you. A number of people have written books about the mind. Will you kindly inform us what you yourself found out about what the mind is?'

The classroom became totally quiet. On hearing the question, Prof. Boas was taken aback. Although apparently it was a simple question, it was an irksome one. He felt uneasy and, after an agonizing pause, he replied, managing a forced smile on his face:

'Look U.G., our duty is to explain and teach what there is in the books. You are expected to learn that and write your examinations. It is a mere waste of time to rack our brains with such problematic questions. It is in fact dangerous to do so. We should not peep into the depths. So what I know and what I don't know is irrelevant now. But one thing I can say: there are no ready-made answers for such questions. That's all.'

U.G. liked Professor Boas immensely. He was a soft, quiet and unobtrusive gentleman. U.G. kept quiet. He did not want to argue with him. The Professor felt relieved when U.G. kept silent.

U.G. came out of the class along with his friends. He was lost in thought. One of the friends said, 'U.G., I'm bored to the bones with his lecture. Right now, I feel hungry. Let's go to the canteen and eat first. By the way, why should we bother about the mind? Just for getting a job, right? That's all. You dissect everything. That's all futile. Come on, let's go.'

But U.G.'s mood did not change. He was serious and grim. His friend added. 'Perhaps someday you will find out what the mind is, who knows?'

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Bishop Charles Webster Leadbeater, who was known as C.W.L. in Theosophical circles and who had been a strong pillar for the Society, went to Perth, Australia and passed away on the 1st March 1934. He had a very big personal library in the Theosophical Society in Adyar. There were many rare books in his library and no one took care of them all these years. They were in disarray and dust piled up on them. Jinarajadasa entrusted U.G. with the job of putting the library in order.

U.G. considered the job an unexpected boon since he was fond of books. He went to the library everyday and began methodically to sort out the books according to subjects and rearrange them.

Leadbeater wrote *Lives of Alcyone,* a book about the previous lives of Jiddu Krishnamurti. In it, he wrote that he had observed twenty one lives of Krishnamurti with his yogic vision and found that Krishnamurti had unique capabilities which could be put to use by the Masters.

U.G. had read that book earlier attentively and wondered how Leadbeater could have written such a mind-boggling book. While probing in the library, U.G. also came across histories of different ancient civilizations. There was no doubt in U.G.'s mind that Leadbeater had concocted the previous lives of Krishnamurti with stories appropriate to the ancient civilizations. The Theosophical Society had implicitly believed that Leadbeater had supernatural powers and a divine vision and therefore could write the histories of the 21 earlier lives of Krishnamurti.

U.G. wrote off the whole account of Leadbeater as mere fiction and a figment of his imagination.

It took three months for U.G. to arrange the library in an orderly manner. Jinarajadasa was immensely pleased with his work.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, Pantulu arrived from Gudiwada to attend the meetings of the Society. There was a great transformation in the Society. He came across a number of new faces. And although a whole week had elapsed since his arrival, U.G. could not spare even ten minutes to talk to him. U.G. was extremely busy, engrossed in his activities.

Pantulu was introduced to the newcomers as "the grandfather of U.G.". Not long ago, it was U.G. who was introduced as "the grandson of T.G.K. Pantulu".

The overall atmosphere of the Society had a fresh look; old heads retired or were relegated to the background. And U.G.'s reputation was at a peak. A clear-cut destiny had been mapped out for him. He was metamorphosed into a perfect Theosophist.

* * * * *

The search for Truth is a deadly and dangerous game with unknown pitfalls. Somewhere along the line, it goes off on a tangent; the search is discontinued for some

reason or other; but the inflamed sense will not leave the individual. The suppressed passion operates in a different form, still reflecting the theme. The fire of passion looks extinguished, but a tiny spark remains in some remote corner. It may become rekindled again. The yearning continues and the journey persists.

U.G. discarded hook, line and sinker the traditional approach and remained a doubting Thomas. However, he decided to work hard and find Truth with his own efforts. Now his life was on the cusp of a major change ever since Ramana Maharshi had thrown a challenge at him.

It is widely believed that the Buddha, Jesus, Mahavira and Prophet Mohammed had realized that state of being. Ramana Maharshi emphatically said, 'I can give you that state. Do you have the eligibility to receive it?' What might be that "state" that he could not take? If that state of being really exists and it is not an illusion or figment of imagination, and if it also dispels mental illusions, if such a state really is there, U.G. wanted to find out all its characteristics with his own effort, without any external support or guidance. Then it should be disseminated to the entire world as a pure sample of Truth. Before that he wanted to prove to himself that the state really does exist. U.G. had one and only one aim or goal before him. He wanted to have 'something which no one so far has ever had in the world.'

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New books are reviewed every Sunday in the *Hindu*. One day, U.G. came across the title *Two Acres of Land and Freedom of Life*.

He could not find the book in the market after a hectic search. He finally bought it in the Moor market. It was the last available copy. He had a great liking for personal freedom and independence and he liked the book immensely. He wanted to experiment with the theories discussed in it.

> In a land of two acres, in a corner with a small cottage, all the necessary facilities should be constructed and the rest of the land should be cultivated to meet all daily needs in his own way. He could have his own activities such as book reading, writing, painting, music and philosophical practices as he liked. Thus, he could spend his life without any worry in a natural manner with absolute freedom.

U.G. discussed the matter with his grandfather. He said he would purchase a suitable piece of land, cultivate it himself and continue his spiritual practice there. Pantulu replied, 'Why purchase a separate piece of land when we already have ample land? Whenever you want, you can have even 40 acres of land, why a mere two acres? You can live there as you like. I will support this venture whole-heartedly.'

While they were discussing the point, a cultivator from the neighboring village, Betavolu, walked in. He respectfully bowed to Pantulu and said, 'Sir, I have a request to make. Kindly consider it a charity.' 'What do you mean, Choudary?' He said, 'Sir, I have 4 ½ acres of land adjoining yours.' He stopped for a while and continued timidly,

'If you sell me one half acre of your land, my land will be five acres and it will be very convenient for my cultivation. It will not cause you any inconvenience or loss. I leave the matter to your grace.' Pantulu thought for a while and after a pause, to the surprise of U.G., gave his consent without any cross-questions or objections.

U.G. was stunned. Why did Choudary ask for half an acre of land? Why did his grandfather give his consent readily without any question, which was uncharacteristic of him?

Though U.G. tentatively thought of having his own style and free life, it was not feasible for him to implement such an idea. Probably his desire might not have been deep-rooted. It was not natural for U.G. to stay at one place, as if excommunicated from others, in the name of freedom or freestyle living.

* * * * *

U.G. returned to Madras from Gudiwada. Whenever his mood struck, he attended college and spent time with his friends. He devoted most of his time, however, for the Theosophical Society and its activities.

One day, Vemuri Narasimha Rao, U.G.'s cousin, came to Madras for making some purchases. He stayed with U.G. After two days, Pantulu also arrived to see an ailing friend of his.

On that day, Narasimha Rao and U.G. went to Mount Road on some business. From there they had to go back to Adyar. U.G. never traveled by bus. He always went about in a "baby taxi" or *jutka*[58]. In those days, one could cover long distances in the City by a tram for a mere *anna*. For some reason they could not find a taxi or a *jutka*. They started walking. Narasimha Rao was tired and suggested hiring a hand-pulled rickshaw. U.G. suddenly turned toward Narasimha Rao and, raising his thick eyebrows with a surprised look, said, 'What are you saying! We'll travel to Adyar by a hand-pulled rickshaw? Are you devoid of any sense? Letting someone pull two persons like us in his rickshaw is a barbarous act which cannot be condoned. I could never boast myself as a great humanitarian or preacher of human values and dignity, but I'll never consent to treating a fellow human being in such a wretched manner. I get disturbed when I even imagine a rickshaw-puller pulling like an animal with all his strength, focusing his attention on the bars. I feel this is a brutal exploitation of his poverty.'

U.G. paused a while, wiped his sweat and continued, 'It's not pity for him nor compassion. He chose rickshaw-pulling to make his living out of penury. His stomach will not get filled with our hollow kindness and shallow sympathy. People in society are ready to be perched on their shoulders like dummy temple gods in a procession.'

Meanwhile, in the opposite direction a rickshaw puller passed by them pulling his rickshaw loaded with two hefty persons and some heavy luggage. U.G. pointed to the scene and said: 'Have you noticed the puller? Do you see how lean and gaunt he is, how emaciated his body is with protruded bones devoid of any flesh and his stomach sucked

in, and how he is galloping in this scorching heat with bare feet like an animal, sweating all over his body?'

Narasimha Rao did not reply. U.G. said again. 'It's against my nature... The best thing is to walk fast to Adyar.' Narasimha Rao felt somewhat embarrassed for his foolish suggestion, having known well U.G.'s style of living and temperament. After walking for five minutes they did run into an unoccupied taxi which they promptly hired.

That evening, Narasimha Rao left for Machilipatnam. The next morning, Pantulu said to U.G., 'Now I'm now going to Tambuchetti Street to see my bedridden friend. I wish to spend much time with him as his days are numbered. I'll have my lunch there. Don't wait for me. From there, I shall leave for Gudiwada.' So saying he left with his bag. That same evening U.G. too suddenly decided to go to Gudiwada. He hired a taxi and went to the Central Station where he purchased a first-class ticket and got into the train. There were only two passengers in the compartment. U.G. spent his time reading.

Thus grandfather and grandson were traveling by the same train in different compartments. In those days, besides first and second class, there was Inter class in between second and third class. In the Gudiwada station Pantulu got off from the Inter class compartment and U.G. stepped out from the first class compartment. Pantulu was surprised to see him. They reached home by riding on the same *jutka*. They did not talk to each other on the way. On reaching home, U.G. went straight to his room and changed his clothes.

Pantulu sat in his chair in the verandah wiping his face with a towel. He began to think about his grandson.

His grandson led a princely life in Adyar like the Prince of Gudiwada. He wore two pairs of clothes each day. Each of them should be not only be washed but also ironed. He had six pairs of expensive Flex shoes. His almirah shelves were full of books. If a book was not available in Madras he ordered it from London. How could a person who did not know how to earn money have the right to spend so lavishly?

After a while, Pantulu sent for U.G. A few moments later, U.G. came to Pantulu's room. Pantulu said to U.G., 'Please, sit down, hear me out carefully.' After taking a deep breath, he continued: 'I have been working very hard, striving with my every muscle, and saving money like a honeybee for your golden future. For your sake I gave up my profession as a lawyer. At the time of your mother's death the value of her property was only 5,000 rupees. I toiled hard and slowly multiplied it up to 20 acres of land, besides 10,000 rupees of hard cash. This Herculean task was accomplished for you and your future security.'

U.G. kept silent. Pantulu continued after a pause, 'Do you know why I have struggled and saved it? It is to prevent you from financial bottlenecks in the future. My prime duty is to see that your financial status should not be lower than that of others. No one knows what the shape of things will be in future, but prudential saving of money is a pivotal part of life's ongoing journey. But what are you doing? As the Telugu proverb

goes, "Kuchamma accumulated money over the years but Machamma squandered the savings in a jiffy." You have been unwisely and recklessly wasting money as you please without hesitation. I fail to understand when you will learn the cardinal value of money.' He then added in a rather sad tone: 'Giving up even my necessities, I have been saving money for your future. I denied myself several pleasures for your sake, do you know that?' He thus completed his lengthy sermon on an emotional note.

The admonitions were routine stuff, U.G. thought, as he had been hearing them ever since he was a child. The nexus between money and his grandfather had been well known. U.G. replied rather quietly, 'As you could see, I am enjoying even today what you expect me to enjoy in some far off future. Don't forego your needs and happiness for my sake.' He quietly left the room. Durgamma overheard the conversation between her husband and her grandson from behind the door.

U.G. stayed in Gudiwada for two days and left for Machilipatnam. He met some of his old friends there and noticed that they had not yet matured mentally. They remained merely emotional and paraded some ideals. They reverted to their former lives and adjusted themselves to the traditional mold.

Some persons who did not have an opportunity to speak in the youth camp he had organized before criticized U.G. for dominating the scene. They complained to Narasimha Rao: 'U.G. is egoistic and thinks that he alone knows everything. He insists his word should be carried out and he does not care for others' views or feelings. He is a self-centered man. Unless he needs to, he doesn't even look at any body. We may not be as learned and intelligent as he is, but we too have a bit of intelligence and we have our own views. Should they not be respected? He has such a domineering personality.' This was the first criticism of U.G. from outside his family.

* * * * *

U.G.'s father Sitaramayya was living permanently in Machilipatnam along with his father Venkatappayya, his second wife Suryakantam and their children. U.G. visited them occasionally. Whenever U.G. visited them Suryakantam displayed profound affection and love toward him without any reservation. In fact, U.G. was treated by the couple as their eldest son. U.G.'s step-sister Bharati curiously enquired, 'Mom, why doesn't our eldest brother Krishna stay with us?' Suryakantam replied, 'Your eldest brother has been brought up by his other grandparents since he was a toddler. Besides, they are rich. He is more comfortable there.'

* * * * *

In 1937, Bharati, his step-sister was betrothed to a boy named of Mallapragada Ramalingeswara Rao who was U.G.'s fellow college student. They knew each other quite well. U.G. was asked to participate in the wedding as an elder brother of the bride. He obliged by washing the groom's feet in a silver plate as tradition required. Everyone was pleased by this act. It showed U.G.'s affection for his step-sister.

One day, U.G. went to the residence of his father. Venkatappayya and Sitaramayya were also at home that day. Venkatappayya remarked, 'I am happy to know that you

joined the B.A. (Hons.) class; you will be the first post-graduate in our family. You are also the first person in the Uppaluri family to visit foreign countries. We are all proud of you. I wonder why you did not get seat at the university in London.' U.G. narrated his foreign experiences at length.

Sitaramayya went out on some business. Venkatappayya talked to his grandson in his room. The causal talk slowly turned into a philosophical discussion. Venkatappayya followed the traditional path and culture, while U.G. was totally averse to it. They argued with each other for about an hour. The grandfather had to yield to the logical and powerful arguments of his young grandson.

After U.G. left in the evening after dinner, Venkatappayya said to his daughter–in–law, 'He is a unique fellow. His philosophical views and arguments are different. He represents another generation. It appears to me that he has gained considerable experience as a member of the Theosophical Society and is far ahead of others. For his young age he a well-read man. He is very rash, abrasive and at the same time powerful in his adamant arguments. He possesses scorching logic. Anyway, he will definitely keep the prestige and reputation of the Uppaluri family.' Suryakantam happily agreed.

From there U.G. went to the Everest Photo Studio of Narasimha Rao. Narasimha Rao selected the best-posed photograph of his and displayed its enlargement in his studio prominently. Next day U.G. left for Gudiwada.

At Gudiwada, along with his other friends U.G. visited the photo studio of Parasuram who was an old friend of his. Photographs of movie stars were displayed in the glass shelves of the studio. Among them was the photo of the great Telugu actress Kanchanamala. U.G. enquired after his business. Parasuram replied, 'It's all right. Recently there has a great demand, as it is the marriage season.' Parasuram signaled to the errand boy to fetch some coffee. Noticing it, U.G. said, 'don't get coffee now; let's all go to Nimmagadda Ramaiah's Restaurant to eat mung-bean pancakes. I asked Subbaiah to come there directly.'

'O.K. U.G., let me take a few pictures of you,' said Parasuram. U.G. smiled and said, 'You studio people fix me with photos. At Machilipatnam my cousin too has taken a number of photos. I don't know why you are all after me?'

Parasuram shot several photos of U.G. after which they all went to the restaurant. By that time, Subbaiah, Kameswara Rao and other friends had arrived there. They spent some time happily and satisfied themselves with their favorite mung-bean pancakes prepared with pure ghee and served with ginger chutney. From the restaurant U.G. returned home.

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That night, there was a quarrel in the house and Durgamma argued with U.G. stubbornly defending herself. Somehow U.G. lost control of himself and shouted at her with a thundering voice, 'You are a petty mean bitch, shut up!'

Durgamma was stunned and was silenced by the vehement voice of her grandson. She did not understand what he had said in English. Pantulu was aghast and deeply hurt. After Durgamma left the room, he commented, 'Thank God, she does not know English. Had she known, she would have committed suicide.' U.G. didn't answer.

Pantulu was unhappy with his grandson's behavior toward his grandmother who reared him like an apple of her eye. 'How ungrateful of him! How could he treat her like this? Why doesn't he ever show his due respect to her, poor woman; she toiled year after year taking care of him with motherly affection.'

Pantulu was upset. After a while, he painfully remarked, 'Well! I am very sorry to say that only criminals behave ungratefully. They ditch people who trust them most. They are devoid of human feelings. To day, your behavior has been atrocious. You acted like a criminal. In our family there are number of lawyers but not criminal lawyers. If you study law, that gap will be filled. Besides, you will shine in that profession.' He thus expressed his deep resentment.

U.G. calmly left the room devoid of any emotion. Many people can't contain their anger and emotions under stress and blurt them out in loose speech. But later, after realizing their mistake, then repent their blurting. But U. G. never regretted what he had said. Strangely, U.G. was immune to all such "silly" human feelings. He believed that sentiments are cultural inputs invented by poets and others who have vested interests.

From his infancy, his grandmother had taken utmost care in bringing him up. U.G. was cruel and even inhumane towards her. He never respected or honored her; nor was he ever grateful to her.

He always looked down on her. He never addressed her as "*Ammamma*"[59] wholeheartedly. Once she pleaded with him pitifully, 'Why don't you call me "Ammamma" sweetly and affectionately at least once?' His immediate reaction was, 'You don't deserve it!'

Ever since his childhood U.G. did not like her attitude and conduct. To him she appeared as rank selfish. In his view, she never treated the servants properly. He could not tolerate her inhuman treatment towards them. She was feeding them stale food left over from the day before. In other contexts, her mode of respect and treatment of the guests varied with their power and status. The important ones were received with sonorous and affectionate embraces. Others were received with sealed lips. Why? U.G. could not understand her differential treatment. He was offended and hurt by her termagant behavior.

23. Master Kuthumi

The next day U.G. left for Adyar to attend college. He read Annie Besant's book *The Masters*. It left a number of doubts and questions in his mind. To clear his doubts he picked up another important book from his shelf, *The Mahatma Letters*. As usual, he browsed through it. Later, he read the entire book carefully. The great Masters, Morya, Kuthumi and others wrote a number of letters to A.P. Barker. Barker collected those letters and wrote a foreword.

U.G. was reading the book till late in the night. While in bed, he recalled the doubts he had had while reading the book. He gradually slipped into sleep. He entered the dreamy world in which he met several ethereal figures. They treated him with utmost respect as if he had been known to them. In the morning he recalled the dream.

He read *The Mahatma Letters* every night. It took him a number of days to finish it. He was totally immersed in it. It created whirls in his mind. He felt that the Masters mentioned in it had occupied his subconscious completely.

One day, U.G. was getting ready to sleep late at night. He felt tired and drowsy. The energy levels in his body were at low ebb. He turned off the light and closed his eyes. After a while, he felt some disturbance in the room; actually, he heard a remote sound as if someone had entered the room. He got up and listened again. There was perfect stillness all around. A few moments later he heard a little sound again. What could it be? He looked around attentively.

All the doors and windows were closed. At this late hour who would come for him? Where does this sound emanate from – from inside or from outside? Again there was a rattling sound. He was fully conscious of it. U.G. sat up on his bed and looked searchingly. Someone was there in the room – he was sure of it. Who could it be? He scanned the entire room with piercing eyes; but for some reason or other he could not get out of his bed; he felt as if his senses became numb. He looked at the right side window and he was shocked and baffled by what he saw there.

U.G. could clearly see a "non-physical" person standing there. He wondered whether this was a wakeful dream or a hallucination. He was awake; yet why this confusion? Was he surrounded by an optical illusion? Was it a daydream? Was it a sublimated suggestion from the subconscious? He continued to look at the person for some time; he felt that the person was familiar to him. All his thoughts froze and suddenly U.G. identified the figure.

When he was a teenager, he stealthily opened his grandfather's special *puja* room in Gudiwada. In it there were number of portraits. This person was prominent among them. He was fascinated by him. It was the Tibetan Saint, Master Kuthumi.

For a while he could not believe himself. He closely observed and tried to unravel the mystery. But he was overpowered by some unknown force. For a moment he was

bewildered but he was not afraid of what he was looking at. He did not lose his balance of mind. Master Kuthumi stood there for a while with a smile on his face behind which shapes were moving like shadows passing across drawn Venetian blinds.

U.G. continued to look at him without a blink. After some time the figure disappeared. U.G. was puzzled. Was it an illusion? How was this all possible? Innumerable thoughts engulfed him like bees in a disturbed beehive.

Do the Masters live in the human subconscious? Do they appear to a few dedicated and selected disciples? It was said that when the Pondicherry Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo, was in deep meditation, Master Kuthumi appeared and observed him. Apparently, Sri Aurobindo asked him to guide him but the Master answered, 'I am not your Guru.'

Was this Master hidden inside his mind? Or outside also, outside of his "thought sphere," as it were? Was this incident fictitious, a fact for him alone?

Sleep eluded him the rest of that night. U.G. was totally awake. He questioned: 'What is thought? Where are thoughts generated? According to traditional philosophy, thoughts must be controlled and won over. Is that possible for human beings? Can a man free himself even for a moment from the "thought-bound system"? Questioning about thought is also a thought. In such a case, is it possible or feasible to overcome thought through thought? Has thought an infinite self-activating capacity? Is the internal world of thought a boundless ocean?'

U.G. began to think seriously. The Upanishads talk about a number of *Kosas* or sheaths in man. One of them is the *Manomaya Kosa*[60]. It temporarily gets excited and, knowingly or unknowingly, it may be able to create a form and look at it. When he read *The Mahatma Letters* and was totally absorbed in it, his mind involuntarily might have gotten excited and all this experience might have resulted from it.

While living at Rishikesh and practicing in the traditional manner, U.G. had seen a number of inner worlds. He had visions of divine beings; he heard divine sounds and had smells also. At that time he rejected all of them as mental illusions caused by intense practice. Why couldn't the present experience be a similar one? All this might be a result of excitation and a hidden desire in the mind which might have manifested itself as a mental projection.

U.G.'s mind was confused. There were a number of conflicting ideas and experiences in *The Mahatma Letters*. He might have accepted them. There might also be internal mental conflicts in him and they might have caused a disturbance. Did he succumb to the mind's melodrama due to his mental conflicts? Did this vision and experience happen to him alone?

In spite of several such cogitations, U.G. could not find rational and logical answers to his questions. He finally came to the conclusion that 'If the central point for the sensorium is located, the answers for these questions could be found.'

U.G. did not discuss this experience with anyone. He maintained secrecy as if what happened to him was some sort of paranormal occurrence. He felt that certain esoteric things should not be revealed.

This strange episode did not end with the experience of one night. After a few days, while U.G. was walking east along the beach in Adyar with a book in his hand, he felt that someone had been following him closely. His instincts prompted him to look back and he was surprised to see the form of Master Kuthumi. Master K.H. smiled at him mysteriously with a seraphic smile. His deep glance spread a kind of affection upon U.G., giving him a feeling of support or succor. U.G. stopped for a moment and stood still, and the Master too halted. After a pause, U.G. continued his walk followed by Master K.H.

Thereafter, strangely, U.G. began to feel that the Master K.H. was with him always; so he ceased to rack his brains about K.H., and considered it as a natural occurrence. Days rolled by. At a certain stage, with or without apparent logic, U.G. had acquired a strong feeling that Master K.H. was operating through him. What could be his intention? He felt as if K.H. was infusing into him a higher spiritual nature. Psychic, mental and other vital forces were in full swing and some spiritual faculties which had been lying dormant in him burst forth all of sudden. Did the invisible Masters crystallize in his consciousness? Only time could tell the truth or untruth of his suppositions.

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In 1942, the clouds of the Second World War spread over Andhra also. Japan dropped bombs on oil tankers in Visakhapatnam. Kakinada was also attacked. There were strong rumors that Madras too might be targeted. Some citizens were ready to sell off their houses at bargain prices. No buyers came forward. Some others left for safer places. The government organized blackout drills. Offices worked in dimmed red light. In Madras the propaganda against Japan was strong and powerful: Tokyo and Bangkok Radio stations were announcing the names of persons arrested in India in connection with the Freedom Struggle before the Indian broadcasting service ever got to them.

There was a rumor that Machilipatnam might be attacked. Vemuri Chinnayya Rao moved his family to Gudiwada from Machilipatnam. However, he had a shelter built in his house to be used in case of a raid. Pantulu sent word to U.G. to come over to Gudiwada immediately. U.G. laughed at the idea: 'Am I afraid of death? If death is destined to come, it has a million openings. Going to Gudiwada for survival is similar to dying in one's backyard after leading a glorious life, as a Telugu proverb says.'[61] U.G. firmly decided to stay in Adyar come what might.

In Adyar, too, a number of shelters were constructed. One day, a siren was heard warning of a possible bomb attack. At that moment, U.G. was alone in his room reading a book. He entered the shelter reluctantly carrying only his portable typewriter with him, leaving all other valuables. U.G. maintained his calm. An hour later, another siren went off announcing that the danger was over. U.G. came out of the shelter and went to his room. Gradually the fear of war in the populace abated.

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Pantulu wrote a causal letter to U.G. at the end of which he added, 'The Betavolu cultivator Choudary, who purchased half an acre of land sometime ago from us, came to see me. I do believe you remember him. Now he sold away his 5 acres of land to us and left the place.' U.G. was surprised at this piece of news. A man who had begged for a half-acre of their land for his convenience, now what prompted him to sell away his entire land and migrate to another village? This simple incident revealed to U.G. that a man cannot own anything permanently in spite of his attachment to it. In the end one has to let go of everything.

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U.G. was living all alone in Adyar, eating his meals in a restaurant. Later he got tired of the restaurant food and began to cook for himself to his taste. He experimented with cooking a variety of foods. He would make a potpourri of different vegetables and prepare an altogether new item. Gradually he became an expert in the culinary art. He frequently invited his friends for a meal. 'Please taste this item and guess the ingredients in it and how it is prepared,' he used to ask them. No one could guess exactly. Sometimes they would get a recipe from him and prepare an item in their homes, but it would not turn out the same nor have the same taste. When they asked him the secret of his cooking, he said it mainly revolved around personal attention. 'When you prepare a dish, your total attention must be on it. The mind plays a bigger role rather than the hand. Of course, the result varies from hand to hand. A right proportion of ingredients is also a key to tasty food,' concluded U.G.

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24. The Tinkle of Wedding Bells

Of late, powerful sexual feelings were disturbing U.G. He was suppressing them, but he also doubted himself. He seriously studied their sources. He kept himself busy with the activities of the Theosophical Society and with reading books; he was also busy at college. Still he could not escape the promptings of sex, although he did not think of actually gratifying them. He had no idea of how the feelings were generated or what their source was.

He noticed how a slight thought about sex would grow into an uncontrollable monster. Why was it so? Where lay the crux of the problem? Is sex not the most natural drive in the human being which doesn't need any explanation? He wanted to test himself by imaging what sexual contact might feel like. The thoughts grew out of control and expanded in every direction like a shrub. Then he thought there was no point in imagining all those amorous things when he had no actual experience of sex at all.

U.G. finally arrived at the understanding that the sexual passion is very natural for the human body like hunger, thirst and sleep. So it is impossible to overcome or subdue these natural urges.

He occasionally indulged in sexual reverie and had wet dreams. He felt ashamed temporarily. 'But why should I be ashamed of involuntary ejaculations? Why should I reject them?' He did not have sexual contacts with anyone; yet he wondered what they would be like.

'Is it imperative to marry someone to satisfy my physical need?' he asked himself. However, he had no desire to get married. He believed that his activities and avocations would not fit into a married life. His life then would turn out to be a mere patchwork quilt and end on a mishmash note. Thus U.G. decided strongly not to marry. Then what about the natural urge? Could he control it?

U.G. began to question himself in terms of these thoughts. Celibacy was supposed to be the first and foremost step toward knowledge of Brahman. Why had the traditional scriptures encouraged such conceit? If there was even one perfect and pure celibate in the world, how could his internal pulsations be different from his? It was now clear to U.G. that all the gurus, yogi's, swamis, ascetics, monastery heads and other spiritual practitioners did not and could not escape from these natural pulsations and wet dreams. He himself was a glaring example of one who could not.

Among his relatives, some youths of his age group were already married and some even had children. Of late, Pantulu had been thinking of the marriage of U.G. He wondered if U.G. would agree to marry. He was worried that if he broached the subject with U.G. directly he might reject the idea. So he asked his friends and well-wishers to find out U.G.'s opinion regarding marriage. When they asked him, U.G. said, rejecting the

suggestion, 'No chance. I don't entertain any idea of getting married. Instead, I have decided to become an ascetic'.

Slowly pressure was mounting on U.G. from all quarters to get married. He thought, 'Why are so many people worried about my marriage? To get married or not is a personal matter. What happens if I don't get married? If I don't get married, I could live freely and happily, pursuing my activities and goals.'

However, he had second thoughts. Perhaps it was foolish to control and suppress his sexual passion which is only a natural urge of the body. Why should he be deprived of it? On the other hand, he had a number of aspirations, ideals and challenging goals. One does not seem to match with the other. What then? How to balance the contradictory needs? He began to oscillate. To have the urge satisfied, he should get married, as approved by the society. What was wrong with a married life?

Gautama Buddha was married; so were Mahavira and Prophet Mohammed. Of course, Jesus was not married and neither did Ramana Maharshi. Sri Ramakrishna was no doubt married but he did not lead a married life. He remained as a bachelor. They all might have made their own decisions depending upon their own conditions, situations and the society around them. U.G. was still in a dilemma.

At the time of the Second World War, Vemuri Chinnayya Rao's wife, Saraswati, was seriously ill and was undergoing a prolonged medical treatment. Pantulu had a premonition that she would die. So he brought her to Gudiwada in the last leg of her life's journey. One day, she informed him, 'Father, I may not survive. Before I die, please feed 500 poor people. I wish to witness such a big event. *Annadanam*[62] is the highest form of worshipping God.' Within two days, Pantulu arranged for it. The event was announced by tom-tom in the quarters where the poor people lived. From 10:30 am till midnight hundreds of people thronged Pantulu's house. More than a thousand people were fed. Saraswati enjoyed witnessing the event.

Later, she was moved to Machilipatnam. Her health took a turn for the worse and ultimately doctors declared that she was suffering from a heart condition, not typhoid. They advised that she should be taken to the hospital in Raya Vellore. However, while they prepared for the journey, her heart suddenly failed to pump.

This was a terrible blow to Durgamma. Her sorrow was uncontrollable. She was crying day in and day out as she had lost all her three daughters one after another.

U.G. came to know of the death and immediately arrived in Machilipatnam. By that time, the cremation was over. Narasimha Rao performed the funeral rites. U.G. was sorrow-struck by the sudden demise of Saraswati. Ever since U.G. was a child she pampered him as if she was his own mother.

Durgamma in her grief spent all her waking hours in the prayer room without food or water and looked a living corpse. Pantulu tried to console her while trying to keep himself busy with the Paravidyashram activities. Only their spiritual outlook was keeping the couple alive.

Under these gloomy circumstances, the family had a ray of hope in U.G. He alone had the ability to dispel the emptiness from their hearts and bring them back to normal life.

'U.G, now the ball is in your court; you alone can console your grandparents who have been in despair. You have to change your opinion regarding marriage,' advised some close relatives.

U.G. reconsidered his attitude toward marriage. He had to fulfill his duty toward his grandparents. He decided to toss a coin and let it make the decision. To marry or not to marry was the question before him. He took a silver rupee coin and tossed it. He got the heads. He thus decided to marry and gave his green signal.

His grandparents learned about his decision and were delighted. His consent gave them a new enthusiasm. Without any delay, Pantulu began to search for a suitable bride. Durgamma also started her enquiries.

Good tradition, culture, wealth, name and fame and, above all, the beauty of the bride were naturally taken into consideration. A number of proposals came forth one after another. There was a great rush. All the proposals were first carefully screened in Gudiwada and only three proposals were forwarded to U.G. in Adyar for his consideration and final decision.

On that day, U.G. was typing some papers in his room and he heard a car stopping outside. He looked out and saw some new faces there. They came directly to U.G.'s place. One of them introduced himself saying, 'Your grandfather asked us to meet you. I am practicing here as a lawyer. We came to discuss my daughter's marriage to you.' The man was tall and stout.

U.G. courteously invited them in and offered seats. Though he had a big name as an orator, he felt shy and kept silent. They observed U.G. and seemed satisfied. The stout man took out a bank passbook from his pocket and placed it on the table. 'This is my daughter's passbook. She has half-a-lakh of rupees in her account. You have every right to it once you are married to her. My daughter is beautiful and she has passed Intermediate. She has good domestic skills: she can cook well and knows sewing, knitting and such things. Well, when can I arrange a meeting for you to see her,' said the stout man eagerly.

U.G. got irritated with the boastful way in which that gentleman talked. But, considering the context, he restrained himself. He thought, 'If a peace of bread is thrown before a dog, it will eagerly grab it. Does he mean that I will yield to such temptations? He was born in lakhs and brought up in lakhs. For him half-a-lakh might seem like a big amount. In my view, that amount has no value at all. He appears to be a showy fellow.'

The gentleman added after a pause, 'One more condition.'

'O, there are some conditions too! What might they be? Does he expect me to make money by lending it?' U.G. mused.

The gentleman said, 'I mean that you should be a lawyer like your grandfather. I have a roaring practice. You can earn pots of money. We came to know that you are a good orator. People like you shine as successful lawyers.'

U.G. felt uneasy and wanted to cut short the conversation. He said politely, 'I'm sorry, I don't like that profession. I'm studying philosophy. My aspirations are in a different direction. I might take any other profession but not a lawyer's.'

'We can discuss that matter later. Please come and see my daughter,' said the gentleman, being pleased with U.G.

'I will inform you at my convenience,' said U.G. He got up from his seat suggesting that they might leave. The gentleman left his visiting card on the table and walked toward his car. After getting into the car, the gentleman's friend said, 'If he agrees, you are the luckiest man in the world. He looks like an extraordinary person. Don't let the opportunity go.'

The second marriage proposal was from Bezawada. It was a traditional family and the girl was said to be beautiful. She was well-educated and was the only daughter in the family. She knew all the domestic work and the family was fabulously wealthy. But the only condition they had was that their son–in–law should live with them because they had no male progeny.[63]

Would U.G. go to his father–in–law's house and settle permanently in Bezawada? U.G.'s friends joked at the possibility. This was unimaginable to him.

'Money, money, everyone talks of money. How is it that they act like they are buying an animal in the marketplace? "We shall give you so much and you will obediently do our bidding." What is this all about? There are several things under the sun which cannot be bought even with crores of rupees,' U.G. thought. He was irritated by both the above proposals.

In Machilipatnam there was a lawyer called Krutthiventi Seshanarayana Rao. His wife Rajyalakshmi was the daughter of Saraswati who died a few months ago. Tadimalla Ramayya was their neighbor. He was a Tahasildar there. His native village was Poolla near Eluru. His family was traditional and well-to-do. His last daughter Kusuma Kumari was to be married.

Rajyalakshmi sent for her grandmother Durgamma who came and saw Kusuma. Durgamma felt as if she was seeing an angel moving about, with unmatched beauty. Durgamma was thrilled and felt that the girl would be a fine match for her grandson.

Kusuma was brought up in a traditional and disciplined manner. She was of good conduct, and she was smart and well-schooled – a rare combination of virtues. Durgamma pictured her grandson by Kusuma's side and felt that each was born for the other.

Durgamma informed U.G. about this match through a messenger, furnishing all the details. 'Ramudu, see the bride once. I am certain that you will like her. She is very beautiful, charming and full of grace, and has an exquisite appearance. She has education as well as culture blended in her. In every respect she is a suitable match for you.'

The messenger added, 'The bride to be is extraordinarily elegant, as if she is made of pure gold. We are all sure you will like her. You are made for each other.'

U.G. was favorable towards the proposal because there was no temptation of money and there were no conditions attached. His grandmother personally interacted with the girl, certified her and sent the message. There was no special reason to reject the proposal. He said, 'All right, since you are recommending the proposal, I will come and see the bride at my convenience.' He asked the messenger, 'By the way, what's the name of the girl?'

'She is as tender as her name. You will like the name too. Her name is Kusuma,' said the messenger smilingly. "Kusuma" means a delicate flower in Telugu.

At Machilipatnam, in the house of Tadimalla Ramayya, Kusuma was being persuaded for a formal session in which the boy sees the prospective bride. 'Kusuma, you just see the boy. He is very handsome, learned and cultured. He is very intelligent and energetic. You won't find any defect in him. He is from a respectable and decent family. You two will be a model couple.'

Before this, Kusuma had already rejected four proposals. She did not like boys with average looks, property and job. When she saw the first boy, she thought he looked like a scare crow. Similarly, for different reasons she rejected the other proposals. She was given full freedom to choose her partner.

Kusuma was the sixth child of Tadimalla Ramayya and Ratnamma. Ratnamma was pregnant twenty one times and Kusuma was the last their surviving daughters. Ratnamma inherited the tendency to have many pregnancies. Kusuma had three elder sisters and two brothers.

Kusuma was born 4th April 1928 and was brought up like a princess. She was always kept happy and cheerful. Her complexion was somewhat pinkish. Matching the color of her body, she had jet black long hair, structured eyebrows and broad eyes. When she spoke moving her eyes around, they livened her appearance.

Her body was perfectly symmetrical, delicate and tender, like a blossomed flower. Her expressions and demeanor were graceful and dignified. She was very fluent in Sanskrit as well as in Telugu. She had read works of classical poetry such as *Amuktamalyada*, *Abhinava Sakuntalam* and *Sringara Naishadham* and had good literary taste. She fancied a 'dream prince'. She had a mellifluous voice and could sing *kritis*[64] of Tyagaraja wonderfully.

In those times, Mathematics was not included in the syllabus for the Matriculation Examination at Banaras. A number of students from Andhra area were taking it. When Kusuma traveled to Banaras with her entourage of servants and cooks to take that examination, she looked like a princess. She stayed in a rented house in Banaras, appeared for the examination and passed it. She studied Intermediate in P.R. College, Kakinada. She was considered not only a "College Beauty" but also "Andhra Beauty".

U.G. came from Madras to Machilipatnam to see the bride at an auspicious moment. Kusuma walked into the room attired in an attractive dress and embellished by gold ornaments. U.G. and Kusuma exchanged glances. Kusuma's heart beat fast; she felt an unknown thrill. Perhaps U.G. was the dream prince she had been nurturing in her heart. There was a new pulsation in U.G., too, hitherto unknown to him. Perhaps she was going to be his life-partner. Each was immensely pleased and satisfied with the other.

Kusuma was asked to sing a song. Without any hesitation, she sang a Tyagaraja *kriti* in an enchanting manner. Everyone was spellbound and totally absorbed in her music.[65] U.G. had no special taste for music. However, he too came under the influence of her singing. The divine song penetrated his being. Her music was even more impressive than her beauty. Later U.G. said, 'I was captivated by her sonorous voice.'

Kusuma whole-heartedly gave her consent without hesitation to marry U.G. U.G. too gave his approval and told his grandfather to go ahead with the other formalities. He left for Adyar, imagining his future new life.

Pantulu demanded 25,000 rupees towards dowry, in addition to other formalities. Ramayya tried to bargain and said to the mediators, 'I performed the marriages of my three daughters on a large scale. I am still recovering from that shock. Under the circumstances I cannot offer more than ten thousand.' Pantulu refused to budge: 'Our boy can get much more actually. Ten thousand is a paltry amount, below our status. Considering the beauty of the bride, I have only asked half the amount I should have asked for.' As usual, Pantulu was firm in the matter of money.

The mediators tried to get Pantulu and Ramayya to agree on an amount. 'Both the bride and bridegroom gave their consent. They are made for each other, as if decided by God. Why quibble about petty money matters?' Pantulu was stubborn and Ramayya expressed his inability to give more. Durgamma quietly observed the tough stand of her husband. She was worried that an excellent match might be missed. She began to pray to all the gods for their grace. She was unable to advice either side. Durgamma, Rajyalakshmi, Kusuma and her mother were all annoyed.

There were several negotiations back and forth, and finally they agreed on a compromise figure of 20,000 rupees, including all formalities. Of all the people, Durgamma felt extremely relieved. All her mental problems and grief faded away. A new enthusiasm was infused into her being.

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U.G. was not aware of these discussions and bargaining. No one informed him. A whole month had gone by and U.G. had no further news. He was eager to get married. Upon enquiry he came to know of what had happened in Gudiwada. The proposal came close to being cancelled but was agreed upon in the last moment. He was terribly annoyed. He dashed off to Gudiwada by the immediately available train.

U.G. was furious with his grandfather. Straightaway, he started to argue with Pantulu: 'Tell me; what were you thinking about me? Am I a chattel to fix up a rate and bargain about? Do I look like an animal in a market? Don't you think I have my own individuality? How could you do this? Believe me, my individuality cannot be bargained or mortgaged under any circumstances. Without my personal involvement and consent how could you make all this abominable fuss? Did I ever discuss the issue of dowry with you? You know my inherent nature, clear-cut ideas and ideals.'

U.G. concluded, 'When I came to know of the way you have behaved, I felt as if I was beheaded. I am ashamed of it, indeed! I never boasted that it would be a great ideal not to accept dowry, but I loathe the linking of marriage with money. To me it is an unnatural act. In my view, demanding dowry is like trying to sell someone for a price.'

Defending his position, Pantulu said, 'I don't understand why you are reacting in this manner? There are certain customs and practices embedded in the society. Everyone is bound to follow them. I performed the marriages of all my daughters giving large amounts of dowry. Why should you think that you are sold out simply because we are asking for a dowry? Depending upon his ability and status, her father may give something to the bridegroom for her future happiness. What is wrong in taking it? Well, I have not done anything out of the way to make you feel ashamed. Money is an important aspect of life.'

'No, in my case it should never happen. The principle that the world is a slave to money is not applicable in my case. My priorities are different. If I marry at all, I will marry without dowry. There is no scope for a second opinion in this matter. I'm sorry,' said U.G. in a cut and dry manner. The discussions continued for some more time. Finally, shouting, 'With dowry, no marriage!' U.G. left for Adyar.

Durgamma was totally upset. She said to Pantulu, 'Let us do as he desires. Don't we know his adamantine nature from his childhood? He might use this as a pretext not to marry at all.'

Durgamma observed her husband gloomy, sitting alone and brooding. She tried to pacify her husband: 'For God's sake, don't be upset. Even if they are told that there will be no dowry, how can they send their daughter with empty hands? Will not everyone laugh at them?'

Meanwhile, everyone in the house of Ramayya was taken aback when they learned that their would-be son-in-law shouted at his grandfather on the issue of dowry and that he would not marry at all if dowry was accepted. They were more shocked than relieved. If the news was true at all, there must be something defective with the boy. They wondered why the boy did it. The bride-to-be, Kusuma, too, was puzzled.

Worrying that if the matter was delayed, U.G. might remain a bachelor for his life, Pantulu sent word to Ramayya assuring him that the marriage would be performed without strings of dowry and an auspicious time for the marriage would be fixed.

The family priest looked into the almanac and the horoscopes of both the bride and the bridegroom and announced that the wedding should take place on the 15th of May.

Pantulu also informed U.G. of the decision. U.G. consulted some papers which he had with him and compared the date in them with the date in his grandfather's letter. The dates coincided. U.G. thought that was amazing.

Everything was well except for a small problem: the elder brother of the bride, Dr. Seshagiri Rao, was working as a military doctor in Algeria. He wanted to attend the marriage and applied for leave at his work but the leave was denied. He could get it only two months later. He reported the problem to his father.

How could Ramayya perform his last daughter's marriage without his elder son being present? So he duly informed this predicament to Pantulu and requested for a wedding date after two months. Pantulu agreed and U.G. was informed that the date of marriage might get postponed. In a most unexpected way U.G. reacted negatively to this: 'I am agreeable for the wedding on the earlier date. I do not agree for a change of date. If that is not possible, then there will be no marriage. My decision in this matter is final.'

Mediators rushed to U.G. and tried to convince him by giving the reason for the proposed change of date, namely, that the bride's eldest brother would be unable to attend the wedding. U.G. said in reply, 'No, sorry. If the wedding is performed on the 15th May, as decided earlier, it's fine. If not, I will not marry. Not only that, I will not think of marriage at all.'

They could not understand why he was so particular about that date. U.G. said, 'I'm sorry, I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings. However, I have my own methods and calculations, and I have to follow them. If I take a decision, it's once and for all; it's final.'

There is an interesting story behind U.G.'s response. U.G. believed in astrology. Three months before seeing Kusuma, U.G. consulted his friend who had a background in astrology. His friend looked into U.G.'s horoscope and predicted, 'You will get married this year on the 15th of May. If you don't marry on that day, then this is not your chart.'

Later, U.G. sent for the horoscope of Kusuma and showed it to his friend. His friend again explained, 'My prediction holds good also according to the horoscope of the bride.' He concluded emphatically, 'this is my challenge: if under any circumstances the marriage is not performed on this day, you will not marry at all. You two are destined to be wife and husband.'

There was a lot of debate in the house of Ramayya. Ramayya was in a fix. He consulted his family and relatives. Finally he reconciled himself to the original date.

U.G. was informed that 15th of May was confirmed as the date of the wedding. His wager won at last.

It is one of U.G.'s characteristics to try and experiment what others have not so far tried nor had the audacity to try. Contrary to custom, U.G. got the invitations for the wedding printed in his own name. (It's customary for the father of the bride to send out invitations in his name.) He then mailed them to his friends, acquaintances and relatives. On knowing this, Pantulu felt hurt.

Ramayya made the necessary arrangements to perform the wedding on a grand scale at his village, Poolla. All the local dignitaries were invited. All the members of the Uppaluri family came from Machilipatnam, led by U.G.'s grandfather, Venkatappayya.

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U.G. arrived in Poolla two days before the marriage along with his circle of friends. His father-in-law had allotted a special guesthouse for their stay. Somehow a rumor spread that the famous Telugu movie star Nagayya had also arrived to grace the occasion. People flocked to get a glimpse of their favorite star. They were disappointed but they consoled themselves upon seeing U.G. who somewhat resembled Nagayya.

That evening, Ramayya, came to the guesthouse to supervise the arrangements. He boasted himself before U.G., 'Do you know that I am a Tahasildar who is honest to the core.'

U.G. instantly replied, 'That's for others to judge, not for you, sir. That only shows how dishonest you are.' When he heard this unexpected pungent remark Ramaiah grimaced and looked terribly embarrassed. After he left, one of his friends remarked, 'U.G., that was too much, you should not have said that on his face.' U.G. replied, defending himself, 'It is a brute fact and I stand by it.'

Traditionally, marriage celebrations in Brahmin families go on for five days and would involve several formalities. U.G. refused to go through all that "nonsensical trash" and cut the ceremony short to just a few hours in spite of vehement objections from all quarters. He thundered, '...in that case, cancel the marriage.' The families complied ruefully. On the morning of the wedding day, the bridegroom had to take an "oil bath", according to custom. Four or five servants would massage his whole body from top to toe with oil and wash it off with a paste made of flour. Before the bath he was stripped naked, which also served those around as a means to observe whether the bridegroom's private parts were intact, and proportionately and properly placed, and whether there was any sign of effeminacy. U.G. bluntly refused the bath. People tried to prevail over him but they failed. He roared again, 'Cancel the marriage,' to the utter consternation of those present.

Traditionally, the bridegroom would set out from the guest house for the venue of wedding either by a horse-driven carriage or by a palanquin. U.G. dismissed this, too, saying, 'I'll walk, come what may; if not, cancel the marriage.'

Everyone was dismayed at U.G.'s odd and untraditional behavior but kept quiet. He walked along the streets with his friends. But he did wear a customary dress suitable for the occasion. He refused to wear a gold ring presented by his in-laws. But he accepted the silver *yajnopavitam* placed before him. He tied a sacred string around the bride's neck, signifying that he had married her. The two golden bulbous pendants were threaded onto the yellow string, the bulbs reminding him of a woman's breasts. Along with the bride he circumambulated seven times around the sacred fire. Sitaramayya, father of U.G., and Suryakantam, stepmother of U.G., officiated at the wedding.

U.G. became a full-fledged householder on 15th May 1943.

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It was the day for the consummation of U.G.'s marriage. His twenty-five-year-old celibacy was at last coming to an end. His heart was anticipating the great thrill of a new experience.

The beautiful new bride who had just completed sixteen springs walked into the bedroom with perfect grace. She was wearing a milk-white silk sari. Her beauty attracted all his attention and admiration.

Each looked at the other silently for a while. One was shy and bashful and the other was keeping a rein on his passions. After a few moments, overcoming her shyness, Kusuma looked at her husband with her wide open eyes curiously and started to speak: 'You firmly declared, "No dowry at all." How come? None of us heard of such a thing before. Do you know that my father is a notorious miser? He is very lucky to have you without any expense. What do you lose, I wonder, if you accept what he is willingly giving you? He will take advantage of you and will not give you anything in future either.'

U.G. was surprised? What was this? Her first words in their new life started with the talk of money and an eagerness for it. What a stupid encounter? Her words sounded odd, artificial and irrelevant. They did not strike him as anything significant to bother to reply. He just smiled.

Nor did U.G. like Kusuma's showiness. She put on number of ornaments, to his dismay.

It was the first time for U.G. to meet a young lady alone so intimately. He was pulsating with the expectation to taste new experiences. His passion was becoming more intense by the minute. His whole being was singularly concentrated on copulation. Without answering her, he continued to look at her without batting his eyelashes and she felt very shy. She started the conversation again, 'You haven't answered me -- why did you reject the dowry? Why are you so unconcerned about money?'

U.G. slowly addressed her with a soft voice, 'Kusuma, the twenty thousand rupees which your father has offered is negligible to me. We have lots of money. Don't worry.' His whole being was concentrated upon a single point; every cell of his body was agog for that ultimate happiness.

She laughed mildly and said, 'What if you do have a lot of money? Will anyone forgo the dowry that is offered on a silver platter? He offered you the same amount as he did to my other sisters.'

These words caused a creeping nausea in U.G. Why this unholy topic at this time? 'Look, Kusuma this is not the context or time to talk about money. We shall discuss that later. Talk about something else; I will listen. Do you like school? Who are your favorite movie actors and actresses? Tell me,' asked U.G. trying to divert her mind.

'Why are you so unconcerned about money? For no reason you have lost an opportunity forever. I am unhappy over that,' said Kusuma innocently looking at her husband with her charming eyes.

U.G. was becoming impatient; he was also getting tired of the money talk. He said, 'All right, Kusuma, if money is so important for you, I will deposit double the amount offered by your father in a bank account in your name. Okay? Now let's stop talking about money and start talking about some other pleasant subject. Well, who is your favorite author in Telugu? I came to know that you are a voracious reader.'

But Kusuma was not satisfied with his reply. 'You're funny. You'll deposit your money in my name? How strange! Everyone will laugh at the idea,' she said.

On the very first night of marriage, supposedly sweet and blissful, the new bride was talking trash. How to understand her? The whole mood was being spoiled with trivial talk. Normally, U.G. got irritated whenever the subject of money was brought up before him. His wife's words were distasteful to him.

He lost his patience and was unable to bear the delay. He blurted rather seriously with a forceful expression, 'Listen! Kusuma, Money...Money...Money...! If you spend all our precious time like this with frivolous talk, I cannot tolerate any longer; I have to rape you! Drop that dirty matter, will you?' Kusuma was startled.

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Early in the morning, when he woke up, U.G. did not find his wife by his side. He yawned and breathed heavily. He got up and stretched his body. He opened the window. A pleasant morning cool breeze caressed him. He looked outside: village folk were busy with their chores. There was a noise of bullock carts mingled with sounds of laughter. He cast his eyes on the bed. Flower petals were scattered all over it. He was plunged in thought.

At last he had tasted the eagerly longed-for sexual experience. Was this all there was to it? This was love making? It too was a momentary experience like any other. Then why is man so crazy that he craves for such a fleeting pleasure? Was it for such a trivial pleasure that wars were fought, thousands had died and kingdoms were lost?

After the so-called blissful night, U.G. felt weary and disillusioned with married life. He could not pinpoint the reason for his weariness. 'Have I committed a grave mistake by marrying? What could be the ultimate result? Well, it's all over; there's no going back. What remains now?'

After three nights, the marriage system became redundant and questionable to U.G. He had to live as a householder now for the rest of his life.

After the three nights of consummation, U.G. suddenly decided to travel to Bezawada with his wife. Brushing aside his in-laws' protests, he took his wife there on a taxi. They stayed at Minakshi's house. A few days later, the newly married couple arrived in Gudiwada. Durgamma made the arrangements to welcome them on a high note. The house was decorated. All important persons and neighbors were invited to take part in a reception followed by a sumptuous lunch.

One of the relatives humorously said, 'U.G., now that you have become a householder, you must have a house-warming ceremony, right?'

'How is it possible? I don't have a house of my own,' replied U.G. casually.

Pantulu stood nearby overhearing the conversation. He immediately reacted, 'It's no big deal. I will get this house registered in your name right now. Then it will be yours forever. After that you can arrange for your house-warming.'

'No, no, I never thought that I should own a house. I don't like the idea that this house should be given away to me. Whether it is in your name or in my name, it makes no difference. You don't bother about it at all,' said U.G., rejecting the offer.

For some unknown reason, Pantulu prepared a draft of his will anyway and registered it. An important point of the will read:

> At the current market rates the cost of this house is more than forty thousand rupees. If either my grandson U.G. *alias* Uppaluri Gopala Krishnamurti or my other grandson, resident of Machilipatnam, Vemuri Narasimha Rao, wishes to buy, it will cost only ten thousand rupees for either of them. This cost holds good at any time in the future, even after my demise.

After a few days, a strange incident occurred. That day, Durgamma came out of her bedroom as usual in the early hours of the morning. She came into the hall and lighted a hurricane lamp. She was about to go inside the kitchen, but peeked towards U.G.'s bedroom where he was sleeping with his new bride. All of a sudden she was petrified to observe a big snake stationed in the bedroom. To call for help she rushed to the servant

quarters opening the front door. By the time the servants got there, the snake uncoiled itself and slithered away fast toward the open door. They tried to hit it but it escaped.

Durgamma was in shock. 'What a big snake! I wonder where it came from and how it got in,' she wondered. She remarked to her husband 'Snakes appear again and again whenever Ramudu is here. As you know, this happened several times since his childhood. Is it a bad omen?'

Pantulu calmed her down saying: 'Don't worry. It is all God's will. I strongly believe that no harm will occur. Believe me.' In the evening Durgamma visited the temple and offered her prayer to the Snake Goddess.

Two days later, U.G. was walking toward Paravidyashram, deeply immersed in his thoughts. A snake hurriedly slithered through between his legs without him noticing it. Someone warned him: 'Watch out, just now a snake passed between your legs.' U.G. paid no heed.

U.G. received a number of greetings in connection with his marriage from different people, including the leaders of the Theosophical Society. He read all the letters and greetings and filed them away. All his local friends headed by Subbaiah came to congratulate him on the occasion.

After some time, the postman delivered a bunch of letters. U.G. asked him to have some refreshments. Immediately a plateful of items were brought. The postman accepted them with a broad smile. When he was about to sit on the ground to eat with the plate in hand, U.G. said, 'No, Basavaiah, please sit in the chair. He hesitantly complied. U.G. kept him company till he finished. When Basavaiah got ready to leave, thanking U.G., U.G. gave him a ten rupee note. The post man was happy.

If anyone wrote a letter to him with the brief address "U.G." or "U.G.K., Gudiwada", with no street address, the letter was yet received promptly. But in the case of Pantulu, even if the address was given in full, there was a delay in the delivery. Once, Pantulu called U.G. and asked him, 'Kittu, why is it that my letters are not delivered as promptly as yours?'

'Well, I have played a little trick. I gave five rupees to each of our two postmen for the Dasara festival. So, all my letters are delivered promptly without delay,' said U.G.

A few days later U.G. went to Poolla along with his wife. He stayed there for two days and informed his wife and her parents that he was leaving for Adyar.

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25. The Bliss of Married Life

U.G. searched for a suitable place to set up house in Adyar. At last, he could find an apartment for rent in the house of Mr. Kamat with all the necessary amenities. He moved all his belongings there from his former residence. Mr. Kamat was a good Theosophist and had a liking for U.G.

After he made his house ready for her arrival, U.G. sent for his wife. On an auspicious day, Kusuma arrived in Madras. For the first time, she was free from the supervision of elders in the household. There was no one here to dominate or order her around. She was the princess in her own kingdom of household. At last, she found her prince charming. She thought to herself, 'Where can I get such an adorable husband? I have a treasure trove; he looks a perfect hero like the movie actor Nagayya.'

As promised to her on the consummation night, U.G. registered a piece of land in Bezawada worth forty thousand rupees in his wife's name and handed the documents to her. She casually looked into them and was flabbergasted. What a strange person! Did such people really exist? She thought that he had made a casual promise to appease her; she never thought even in her dreams that he was serious. What a wonderful husband! Not just strange but also strong-willed.

The house-owner Kamat had developed a special liking for and filial attitude toward Kusuma. He wished he had such a beautiful daughter and such a fine son-in-law.

Kusuma did not know cooking. She was accustomed to depending on servants while she lived with her parents. U.G. patiently tried to teach her some cooking. But several times she made mistakes in preparing dishes. More often, U.G. prepared the food. If they had food at home one day they ate in a restaurant the next day. They went on sightseeing to various interesting places. They always traveled by taxi. In the evenings they spent time on the beach.

Their new setup in Madras was going on smoothly. There was, however, the pressure of relatives. Since Kusuma could not cook well and U.G. did not have enough time, when there were visitors, food was ordered from restaurants. The movie director Yeragudipati Varada Rao, popularly known as Y.V. Rao, was a close friend of U.G. and visited U.G. on occasions. Previously he borrowed some money from U.G. and started a restaurant; but he could not repay the money for quite some time. But he supplied food from his restaurant whenever U.G. needed it.

In his house, U.G. arranged a study room separately for himself where he also entertained his friends and guests.

Kusuma was surprised at the busy schedule her husband had kept. He spent most of his time reading books or writing on his typewriter.

Some relatives come down from Eluru to attend the Theosophical Society meetings. Kusuma attended the meetings with them for a few hours. But she could not make head or tail out of them. Their content was totally alien to her.

One Sunday, George Arundale visited them. The couple received him with the utmost consideration and respect. Arundale was pleased with Kusuma and gave her a gift of 500 rupees. She hesitated to take it, but U.G. nodded his head in approval. Arundale said smiling, 'U.G., don't tell Rukmini that I have given you the money. It's between you and me.'

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Kusuma spent her time reading Telugu books. Her favorite author was Chalam who created a whirlwind of commotion and revolution in the literary field.

> A woman has also individuality. She has a body of her own. It needs exercise. She has a mind of her own and it needs knowledge. She has a heart and it requires expression. Her thoughts need recognition and respect. She should be allowed to live as she likes.

With such lines as these Chalam created ripples of social revolution through his books and awakened women. For the first time, he justified complete sexual freedom for women, which was unheard of in the society before his time. In 1926, his long essay "Man and Woman" was published. At the end of it he wrote:

> Man can do little for woman except indirectly by removing himself from her path and disowning all responsibility and control over her. It is much better for a father to leave his daughter unmarried than control her bodily exercises, much better to leave her ignorant than control and censor her knowledge process, much better to let her become an old maid or prostitute than control her love. Woman should be allowed to seek and acquire her own spouse or spouses, have her own children and commit her own sins. Leave her alone!

People who had upheld traditional values were appalled by his books and displeased with him. They complained that he was encouraging women to revolt against tradition, social customs, morals and age-old beliefs. They thought that he was advocating debauchery through his writings and that the family system was breaking down as a result. They prohibited his literature and declared that it was a crime to read it.

Chalam was a distant relative of U.G. Once, Chalam's wife, Ranganayakamma, thought of offering their daughter Sowris to U.G. in marriage. But, Durgamma vetoed the proposal.

Kusuma read Chalam's books and tried to explain the novelty of those books to U.G. She read to him some of his stories and they discussed them analytically. These discussions kept Kusuma's spirits alive.

One day, U.G. asked her, 'What's the big deal of merely appreciating the greatness of those books? If you were in one of those situations, what would you do? Tell me, do you have the temerity to break down tradition and implement your favorite author's policies?'

Kusuma was petrified by this challenge. This casual remark was to her an unforeseen catastrophe and it was totally disagreeable to her mental makeup. She was reading Chalam's books as a hobby but not necessarily to be influenced by them.

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U.G. upheld complete empowerment of and impunity for women. He persuaded his wife to continue her education. After her marriage, she discontinued her education after the first year of Intermediate at P.R. College. Now she was quite reluctant to resume her education. She did not like the idea of living away from her 'charming prince.' Moreover, why should she study after marriage? Where was the need for it? But U.G. time and again prevailed upon her. Unwillingly, she agreed to study for the second year of Intermediate to complete the course.

U.G. came to Bezawada along with wife. Ammanabrolu Minakshi, daughter of Rukmini, was in Bezawada. Rukmini was the eldest daughter of Pantulu. In their childhood, Minakshi and U.G. were brought up together by Durgamma in Gudiwada. U.G. asked his wife to live with Minakshi while she went to college in Bezawada.

In March, 1944, Kusuma became pregnant. In April, she appeared for the Intermediate examinations. After the examinations, U.G. came to Gudiwada along with her. Durgamma was extremely happy to know about the pregnancy.

At that time John B. Coats was camping in Gudiwada attending the Theosophical Federation meetings. With the encouragement of George Arundale, Coats strengthened the World Federation of Young Theosophists and acted as its President for a number of years.

In the Theosophical circles Coats was known as a soft gentleman with a towering personality. His credo was, 'It is natural for a person to commit mistakes. Therefore, that mistake is looked upon as correct by a broadminded man, giving the benefit of doubt to that person.' Saint Kuthumi said, 'Humanity is the greatest orphan.' Keeping these words in mind, Coats had been working to uplift humanity with a great zeal.

Coats recognized the spark of intelligence and potential in U.G. He liked U.G. for his principles, dedication, non-compromising attitude and honesty in fighting narrow outlooks and blind beliefs. He became close to him. They appreciated each other.

U.G. spent a week with Coats in Gudiwada. After the meetings Coats left for Rajahmundry and U.G. for Adyar.

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Three years of U.G.'s education at Pacchayyappa College was nearing completion. As usual with him, U.G. failed the examinations at the end of both the first year and the second year. However, there was a provision to retake the examinations for the failed subjects, provided the attendance of the candidates in the College was at least 80%. Moreover, all the departments in the College would together check the attendance records to decide upon the eligibility of candidates for the repeat examinations.

U.G. learned about the rules and took care of them in his usual fashion. Professor Mahadevan knew very well that U.G. was irregular in his class attendance. So he thought that U.G. would not be eligible to retake the examinations. All the heads of the departments sat together and checked the attendance. U.G. was on the borderline and finally he was declared eligible. Prof. Mahadevan was surprised. How could it happen? He went to the office and checked the attendance registers. They were all in order.

He could not understand how that was possible; so he sent for U.G. He asked, 'Look, U.G., I knew very well that you were attending the college only occasionally. You know that pretty well too. But the registers show that your attendance is up to the mark. I wonder how that could happen. Tell me honestly.'

U.G. smiled and replied: 'It's the power of money, sir! Is it not said that money is the basis of the world?'

The Professor was unhappy with the answer. He commented, 'Being a student of ethics, how could you do this?' He did not appreciate such improper methods.

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Pantulu was becoming old. He entered his eighties. Before, his body had been strong as if made of steel. Of late, however, he had been falling sick often. He began to spend his time reading books and supervising events at Paravidyashram.

His grandson, U.G., had grown up to be a wise and learned adult. He had been noted as a "bright Theosophist". In fact, his grandson was far ahead of him in Theosophical circles. Now he was a householder and going to be the father of a child soon. God only knows the future of his grandson for whom he had paved the royal way. Sometimes the person who plants a seed may not live to reap the fruit of it.

In the twilight phase of his life Pantulu nurtured a heartfelt wish. For a few years he had been wishing that his grandson should live happily in Gudiwada with his family, supervising the programs and activities of the Paravidyashram under his guidance. However, he knew pretty well his grandson would not care about or honor his wish. Hence he had kept quiet. Yet, he wanted to learn his views in this matter. Pantulu consulted his wife. She immediately dissuaded him saying, 'Oh, my God! Knowing his adverse nature, how could you expect him to honor your wish? I have no hope of it.'

Pantulu heaved a deep sigh and said, 'Yes, I know it. However, instead of guessing his stock reply, it is better to ask him and know his mind. If he refuses, I'll have no regrets. If, however, by strange chance, he agrees, we'll be happy. Let him decide.'

U.G. returned to Gudiwada from Adyar. Kusuma jumped with joy on seeing him. When they were alone she said, 'Oh, I am unable to tolerate our separation. I always wish to be in your presence.'

U.G. smiled mildly and said, 'Are you feeling your separation from me worse than from your parents?' She affectionately replied, 'After marriage, the husband is everything for a woman.'

'A woman should develop her individuality. You must quit your conventional way of thinking and think independently. You need to be mature enough to live with the times. Repeating statements such as "The husband is God in person" like an old gramophone record may be suitable for traditional people. But it will not at all help a woman who wishes to develop her own personality and individuality,' said U.G. on a lengthy note.

Kusuma was surprised. 'I said something casually and immediately you gave me a lecture. Thanks. I bow to you. Kindly leave me as I am; I can't wipe out my upbringing,' she said with a pleading voice.

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In the evening, U.G. observed the activities at Paravidyashram. He spent some time with Mallavarapu Venkataramaiah. Later he was at the Esoteric Section. He saw the new additions to the library. Finally, he entered the room which he got built exclusively for himself. He spent about half an hour there. When he was about to leave, he ran into a worker in the Ashram.

'Naganna, how are you all? Has the health of your wife improved? Is your son going to school regularly?' enquired U.G. kindly.

'Master, by your grace we are all doing well. My wife's health is back to normal now. As per your advice, I am sending my son to school. Poor people like us survive at the mercy of noble people like you, sir,' Naganna replied humbly.

U.G. took some money out of his pocket and gave it to him saying, 'Get your son educated. Don't hesitate to ask me for money whenever you need. I will put in a word to Venkataramaiah about you.'

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After dinner that evening, Durgamma informed him, 'Grandpa wants to talk to you. Please go to his room, Ramudu.'

U.G. walked into Pantulu's room. Pantulu appeared very sickly and slowed down. His whole body was gnarled like an old tree trunk; he buried himself in the bed like a lump of mud. He looked like a ripened fruit ready to fall on the ground any moment. He looked remote, brittle and in self-abandonment. The wall clock struck ten.

U.G. asked, 'What's the matter, grandpa?' very casually, as his eyes were transfixed on the old man.

'Please sit down,' said Pantulu. U.G. sat in the chair opposite to Pantulu. Pantulu was thoughtful for a few moments, hesitated and then slowly spoke to U.G. in a supplicant voice. U.G. lifted his head and bent toward Pantulu stretching his ears trying to listen with attention.

'Well, I've been thinking of telling you of an important matter for a long time,' so saying Pantulu halted in the middle of his words and continued in a low tone: 'Till now I haven't asked you for any personal favor, have I? Today that time has come. I would like to ask for something. Will you fulfill my only desire?' he said in an entreating manner.

U.G. reacted instantly raising his eyebrows, as if he already knew what was going to be asked, 'Sorry, awfully sorry, I may disappoint you; you may ask for it anyway.'

Pantulu's face wore a look of despair and he kept quiet. Without the remotest hope he pleaded, 'I wonder if you could settle down here along with your family, supervising Paravidyashram and continuing your work as usual at Adyar.' He stopped abruptly and finished by saying, 'For you, your wife and your children there will not be any problem in future. I will bequeath all my property to you. Think about it.'

U.G. replied immediately without any hesitation, 'Impossible!' He then added firmly, 'My mission is different. My ambitions and aspirations are of a different kind. My destiny is cut out to be on differential lines. My future life is not linked up with any particular place. So under no circumstances will I settle down in Gudiwada. It is outside my script.' He stopped a while and thundered, 'Let alone your property, even the entire property of all the citizens of Gudiwada will not make me stay here; it's just not possible.' This he said without a trace of emotion or sentimentality in a baritone voice. The words seemed to linger in the air after they were spoken.

Then U.G. calmed down a bit and continued in sympathetic tone, 'I'm sorry to give you such grief. Let me pursue life in my own way. I would like to be left alone.'

Pantulu did not utter another syllable; he was crestfallen and somewhat embarrassed. U.G. got up from the chair. He observed his grandmother behind the door. Looking at her casually, he said "good night" and left the room. The old man's last wish was denied; the joy of being and living together came to a grinding halt.

Hearing the conversations from behind the door, clinching her lips and breathing in exasperation, Durgamma stared at U.G., her eyeballs fixing a sharp look at him. She was overcome with pity for her husband who sat helplessly, with a pathetic face, sunken

eyes and worn out features, which all seemed to beg for her sympathy and affection. Tears welled up in her eyes.

She slowly ambled towards him, fixed her gaze on him with intent regard and said, 'Please don't get upset. We all knew what his reply was going to be.'

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After a few weeks, U.G. dropped Kusuma off at Poolla and went back to Adyar. Later, it was decided that Kusuma might have her delivery in Visakhapatnam. Her elder brother, Dr. Seshagiri Rao, had returned from military service and was working at the Government Hospital. After a few days, Kusuma went to Visakhapatnam to her brother's place.

Meanwhile, U.G. asked his friend Kameswara Rao to find out about the results of Kusuma's Intermediate Examination in Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, before the official announcement. He told him that if the results were not going to be favorable, he should make sure of her success nevertheless by bribing the officials. After a week Kameswara Rao learned, upon enquiring, that she had passed the examination through her own effort. He duly conveyed this news to U.G. telegraphically. Immediately, U.G. wrote a letter to his wife congratulating her on her success.

26. The Fall of the Patriarch

The general health of Pantulu was deteriorating day by day. He was emaciated, his bones were brittle and his strength was dwindling. His muscles and sinews were like tender lumps, and his skin was sallow. His whole appearance shriveled.

He had pain in the throat – he could only take in liquid food, that too with great difficulty. A number of doctors examined him and administered different medicines to no avail. The guttural pain was on the rise. He felt that something was clutching his throat and squeezing it. He felt heavy in his chest. Quite often he gasped for breath. His eyelids were heavy as lead. His speech became indistinct.

Finally, the thunderbolt had struck. It was confirmed that Pantulu had throat cancer. When he learned of it, he immediately remembered the old incident when he had caused untold suffering to his debtor relative. Pantulu felt strongly that God had meted out this punishment as a retribution for his cruel deeds.

When he heard the news, U.G. went to Gudiwada. Durgamma came to know of the magnitude of the disease; she learned that her husband's illness could not be cured and he was awaiting his death call. Mentally she was paralyzed and lost her bearings.

Pantulu could gauge the silent agony of his wife. He tried to console her on a philosophical tone. 'Durga, my time is up. I must prepare for the final journey. The Almighty God has allowed me to have the present life and he is taking it back. Why should we grieve over it?'

U.G. understood that Pantulu's life was coming to an end. He noticed that his grandfather was mentally calm and quiet, and expecting to die at any moment. All the close relatives and the adopted son Jagannadham were informed. They arrived in Gudiwada one after another. Dr. Harinarayana, a close relative of Pantulu, was also on hand. He observed that the disease was at an advanced stage and estimated that Pantulu might not live for more than a month.

Pantulu's voice became gradually groggier and he appeared like a skeleton, as even milk and fruit juice could not give him sustenance. The body shrank more. Dr. Harinarayana talked to U.G. in private and told him that Pantulu might survive a little longer if he was fed chicken soup: 'I don't know if he will accept it. What do you think?'

'The decision is my grandmother's, not mine. He lived a traditional life. Will he take chicken soup? I very much doubt it,' replied U.G. 'Then, he should be fed without his knowledge, that too if all of you agree to it. Let's ask Durga,' the doctor said.

The proposal was explained to Durgamma. 'If you agree to it, he will regain his strength somewhat. Under the circumstances, we cannot do much else except to prolong his life for some more days,' said Dr. Harinarayana.

How could she disagree with the proposal that she could wear the sacred *mangala sutram* for a little while longer? But would not Pantulu be upset if he came to know of it? He had been a strict Brahmin all his life; but in such emergencies it might not be wrong to act contrary to tradition. She pondered over the proposal for sometime and reluctantly gave her consent.

From that day, Pantulu was fed chicken soup in a disguised form and he began to feel more energetic. But soon he discovered somehow that chicken coup was being fed to him. However, he was not furious. He sent for his wife and complained to her that in the last phase of his life, his grandson depraved him with this corrupting act.

'O my God, Ramudu is innocent. I'm responsible for this. Our doctor consulted me and I gave him my consent. How can I afford to lose you? When I was informed that you would regain some strength with this food, I had no other choice. This is not a deliberate offence against you. Believe me! No doubt Ramudu is opposed to tradition. But I know him well; he never forces his ideas on others,' said Durgamma emotionally to clear off her husband's misunderstanding of U.G.

Pantulu heaved a sigh of relief. 'Yes, I can see that he has suspended all his activities and totally devoted himself to my service.'

Pantulu always wore a golden chain of Rudraksha beads. On the lower part of it hung the insignia of the Theosophical Society made of pure gold. One day, he had a sinking feeling that he could die any moment. He instantly removed the gold chain and kept it aside on a table. He fell into some sort of coma. Durgamma rubbed his legs and palms vigorously for a few minutes. He slowly became conscious after sometime. This happened two or three times. After regaining his consciousness he would put on his chain again.

Meanwhile, preparations were under way to organize the activities of the Theosophical Federation in Gudiwada on a large scale. U.G. was quite busy supervising that work. John Cotes, Jinarajadasa and other important people had assembled for the occasion. A number of participants from all over Andhra were expected to attend the event.

The sessions of the Federation were scheduled to begin that day. Pantulu's health took a turn for the worse and he was on the verge of death. Yet he was enquiring about the arrangements of the function.

The whole night Pantulu was tossing and turning in bed with pain. The medicines given for temporary relief of pain were not effective. U.G. kept watch by Pantulu's bedside. Narasimha Rao came from Machilipatnam to see his ailing grandfather and he too sat by his side.

The next day, all the friends and representatives of the Theosophical Society came to know about Pantulu's critical condition and came to pay their respects.

'Why have you all come over here neglecting your business of the day? First attend to it. That's more important. You may come in the evening after you finish your work,' said Pantulu and turned them back.

He was alone. He felt some relief and a strange peace. He reviewed the highlights of his life. All of a sudden he closed his eyes and could not open them again. There was heaviness in his heart and his breathing was hard. His vitality was at its lowest ebb. He felt breathless and suffocated. Somehow he opened his eyes. His eyelids were heavy. He looked around. The room appeared completely dark. He felt as if he was imprisoned in a dark room.

He called for his wife in a feeble voice. There was no response. He made some sound. On hearing it Durgamma rushed to him with a cup of fruit juice in hand. He signed to her to open the windows. She left the fruit juice on the table and opened the windows. The slant rays of sun made the room brighter and Pantulu looked around with wide-open eyes. The dust particles floating in the air were dancing in the sunrays and appeared to take different shapes.

Pantulu felt that his tongue was becoming parched. He muttered slowly, 'Durga, give me a little cold water from the pot. My mouth is dry.' Durgamma tried to give him some fruit juice. He shook his head and asked for water in a low voice. Durgamma left to bring some cool water.

Pantulu gathered some energy and tried to sit. But he could not. He would have fallen sideways. Knowing that he was losing control of his body, he adjusted himself in the bed looking towards the door for his wife.

All of sudden, all the brightness in the room had disappeared and he was engulfed in darkness. Where had all the light gone? Suddenly a flash of light appeared before his mental horizon and his eyelids closed for the last time.

Durgamma came back with a cup of water. There was no response or movement in the bed. Her eyes darted in the direction of her husband. How could he go into such deep sleep in such a short time? She looked into his face and she could not guess whether he was breathing or not. There was an indefinable brightness in his face. She left the cup of water on the stool and stood silently for a few moments. Should she wake him up or not?

She feared some evil. She touched his hand and in a shock she withdrew her hand quickly. His hand was cold as ice. The vital airs of Pantulu broke out of the earthly shackles and left his body. He was 83. The Nadi astrology predicted that he would die in 1925. But he passed away in 1944, 19 years later.
Durgamma cried out and fainted. She adored her husband and served him with love and care till his death. On hearing her loud cry everyone in the house was terrified. They all rushed in and realized what had happened. The entire house was plunged in grief.

A servant dashed to the Paravidyasram and from a distance U.G. guessed the news and immediately rushed home.

U.G. went directly to his grandfather's room and looked at him. There was no change of radiance in his face. His peaceful face indicated that he had invited death as wholeheartedly as he had loved his life. Though he had his last sleep, the impression of life did not disappear from his face. Life and death harmoniously blended in it. Life's secrets were concealed in his peaceful face. U.G. took the *rudraksha* necklace and deposited it in his almirah.

The sad news spread in Paravidyasram where a meeting was going on. The meeting was adjourned and the representatives started to flow into Pantulu's house. George Cotes, Jinarajadasa and other important people of Society paid their homage to their beloved T.G.K. His adopted son Jagannadham performed the funeral rites according to tradition.

In the evening, a condolence meeting was organized at the Paravidyasram. 'The death of T.G.K. is a severe blow to the Theosophical Society,' said Jinarajadasa in his speech. John Cotes said, 'We grieve the death of T.G.K., who represented the former generation as a perfect Theosophist. His services to the Society are memorable.'

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On the tenth day of Pantulu's death, there were special rites and rituals. Durgamma had to remove the insignia of her being a married woman such as her *mangala sutra*, bangles and vermillion, as she had now become a widow.

In orthodox families widows were also required to have their heads shaved, wear only a white sari and live on salt- and spice-free food. There were many other such practices. There were discussions in Pantulu's household about their implementation. As U.G. walked into the house he heard a loud voice shouting, 'It's our tradition. We should follow and obey it. If we discard it, we don't have any future. Scriptures have ordered accordingly.'

An orthodox traditional Brahmin called Ramamurti was proclaiming his dogmatic views. Whether invited or not he often visited Pantulu and recited the principles of tradition time and again. Everyone called him a "Chatter Box". He had the habit of interfering in people's affairs, preaching them and offering them his unsolicited advice.

On seeing U.G., he was somewhat taken aback. Another person in that room said to U.G. pointing to Ramamurti, 'He is insisting that your grandmother should have her head shaved.' U.G. frowned at Ramamurti and asked, 'Why should she?'

Ramamurti could not but speak. He cleared his throat and spoke as softly as he could: 'I'm only quoting from the scriptures. It's not just my personal view. Everyone knows your grandfather's traditional lifestyle. He is an epitome of *sanatana dharma*[66]. He

followed the social customs whole-heartedly. So his wife Durgamma should have her head shaven and respect the tradition so that your grandfather's soul will rest in peace.'

U.G. pretended to listen to him attentively but said in a lighthearted manner, 'Here such things are not necessary at all. Whether the scriptures proclaimed them or not, we know the traditions very well, and we also know what should be observed or how. We don't need anyone's advice.'

Ramamurti replied rather tamely, 'Why do you oppose it? If tradition is violated, many will speak ill of you. It's our duty to follow others in the community. We're the torchbearers of tradition. I'm speaking keeping in view your grandfather's frame of mind.'

Arguments continued back and forth. Ramamurti quoted the ancient scriptures at length. But his arguments fell flat before the scorching logic of U.G.

U.G. angrily burst out, 'The whole town knows how traditional *you* are! Hardly within a month after your first wife's death you've married again. When she too had died, you had your third marriage with a girl forty years younger than you. Is that tradition? No one on earth will approve your deeds. It's nothing short of lust. At your age you cannot control your passions, yet how dare you preach others about tradition! How do expect us to practice what you preach? When one of your relatives died, did his widow have her head shaven? There you were turned out like a dog. Tomorrow when you die will your wife bald her head? Or will she elope with someone? First, take care of yourself. Don't poke your nose in others' affairs. You may as well leave.' U.G. was ferocious. They were afraid that U.G. would physically force him out. Crestfallen, he left hurriedly.

Durgamma did not have her head shaved. She felt grateful to her grandson.

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After a few days, U.G. returned to Adyar to attend college. It was announced on the bulletin board that examination report cards would be issued in the office. He knew that he had failed. Still, he obtained the card from the office along with the others. He did not bother to look at the marks. At the bottom of the card, he struck off the words "Parent or Guardian" and wrote "Student". He signed above the word and handed the card back in the office.

The next day, when U.G. went to college a messenger boy informed him that the Principal wanted to see him. U.G. went into the Principal's room. He noticed his examination report card lying on the principal's table. On seeing U.G., the Principal held it in his hand and said rather angrily, 'What's this? We need a guardian's signature, not yours. It's not proper for you to strike the words "Parent or Guardian" and write "Student" as you like. What's your explanation?'

'I don't have any, Sir. My grandfather has passed away recently. That's why I did it,' said U.G. coolly.

'Nevertheless, the signature of your elders is required. The card contains a number of marks of your glaring absence. That should be brought to the notice of your elders. They also should know that you did not appear for the examinations. There are strict rules here,' said the Principal.

'I don't' have anyone, Sir.'

'Then, you have to pay a fine of twenty five rupees.'

'With pleasure, Sir. If you accept it, I'll give you an Imperial Bank check right now,' said U.G. casually.

The Principal did not appreciate U.G.'s stubbornness and indifference: 'Why have you joined the college, what for?'

'Well, I don't have any other activities. I am taking classes to pass my time, but not for any degree.'

The Principal was taken aback. 'What? Are degrees so cheap and useless in your view?'

'I don't have any faith in these academic studies and what they teach,' said U.G. bluntly.

The principal became angry at his answer. He said, 'I'm sorry, but the signature of one of your elders, whoever it may be, must be there on this card. They should also sign an affidavit confirming your relationship to him or her,' and dismissed U.G.

U.G. walked out calmly. The next day, when U.G. went to college, it was closed. The previous night, the Principal had died of a massive heart attack

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One day, U.G. was typing some letters. Suddenly, a thought flashed in his mind: when he had no faith whatsoever in the system of education and the knowledge it tried to impart, why should he pursue his studies at all?

The next day, he went to the college and announced that he was discontinuing his studies. His friends were aghast.

'Why? What prompted you to take such a drastic step? It's sheer madness. If you are patient just for a few more months, you'll receive the coveted degree. If you just as much as browse through the books you'll pass. After so many years of attending college, it's foolish to abruptly discontinue like this.' U.G. smiled and did not answer.

Professor Mahadevan came to know of this and he too tried to persuade him, but in vain.

Thus U.G.'s college career came to an abrupt and unexpected end.

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On 8th December 1944, Kusuma gave birth to a bony baby daughter in Visakhapatnam. The naming ceremony was held in Bezawada, in the house of Ammanabrolu Minakshi, and the child was named "Bharati," after U.G.'s mother. Durgamma felt that her own daughter Bharati was born again.

After three months, Kusuma came to Adyar with her daughter in arms. Along with her came a servant girl to help.

U.G. decided to encourage his wife to hone her inborn musical talent. Accordingly, she received coaching from the great Ganakala Visarada Karaikudi Samba Siva Iyer.

U.G. loved his wife immensely. He treated her as a friend as well. He respected her individuality. He never assumed that he had any authority over her. He never talked to her rudely; he, however, did not give her any lenience either. He accorded her a natural status as a life-partner.

He prevailed upon Kusuma to appear for the B.A. Degree Examination privately. She did not show any interest in following his advice.

'You think that the home is a paradise for you. You waste your time with frivolous talk. You should be able to move about in society with self-confidence and without any hesitation or fear. To achieve this aim, you need education.' He added, 'People's lives may not go along as planned, particularly, the lives of women. Women should be able to adjust themselves to changing conditions with confidence, skill and if necessary, daring. It is highly desirable to have financial independence. Women should not avoid dealing with financial matters assuming that the husband makes the money or that they have some property or it's the business of the husband to take care of such matters. It is unfortunate if women don't assert their individuality and rights. If they don't, Chalam's and others' proclamations will all go to waste.' U.G. looked at his wife intently waiting for her reaction.

Her eyes popped out. With a surprised look she said, 'What a great lecture you have given! Have I to rule the country by studying all these things? I am a "home bird", a dedicated housewife. What I need is a peaceful and fruitful home life where I can look after my children. My home is my veritable paradise. My God is none other than my beloved husband. That's all.'

Kusuma did not believe in a limited family. She had a passion to give birth to a child each season and name each of her children after the seasons. She believed that a woman is fulfilled when she has numerous children. In her view, if a house is abuzz with a number of children running around, it is "heaven on earth". She had inherited her lust for children from her mother. (Her mother Ratnamma was pregnant twenty times.)

Hearing her view on family life, U.G. said, 'Is this is the transformation Chalam has inspired in you? Didn't he stress time and again that the saying, "Pregnancy in rainy season and delivery in summer season" must be shattered into pieces?'

Thus U.G. conveyed to her his definite views on the empowerment of women. He had a great respect and high regard for Chalam who led the life of a revolutionary. He appreciated Chalam's efforts to awaken women through his literature. In fact, after their marriage, Kusuma wanted to see Chalam in Bezawada. When she informed her wish to Durgamma, Durgamma was petrified and she immediately rejected the idea saying, 'I don't like you to meet Chalam. His influence is dangerous and destructive. He uproots happy families. He is devil incarnation. Do not visit him.'

On knowing this, U.G. encouraged his wife to go and see Chalam saying. 'He is an honest man and a harbinger of women's liberation. He exposes brutal facts openly and prominently in his literature. He is a great humanist. By meeting him there won't be any danger of indoctrination.'

Kusuma was in a quandary. But when they both went to Bezawada to attend a family gathering, Kusuma came to know that Chalam was stationed in Bezawada. U.G. encouraged her to see him on condition that she should not let his grandmother know about it. Kusuma hired a taxi and went to Chalam's house. Chalam invited her in unassumingly and enquired about her. She sat in front of him. He was sitting in an "easy" chair, smoking a cigarette and was surrounded by some friends. He wore an old *lungi*[67], a *bunian*[68], with unkempt hair and stubble. His bizarre mien was unromantic and unimpressive. All her romantic visions woven around his personality collapsed like a pack of cards. A creeping feeling of disenchantment overtook her. After ten minutes, she left crestfallen.

She later narrated her impressions to U.G. He said, 'Reality is always different from what you think it should be. Nevertheless, he is a great writer; enjoy his writings.'

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After he discontinued his college career, U.G. focused his attention on the activities of the Theosophical Society. He visited a number of places. He knew the value of time and did not waste it. He kept up with his reading even while traveling and took notes on what he had read. He always carried his typewriter wherever he went. Once he left town on a tour, he would not think of his home till he returned; he did not miss his wife or daughter. He was not sentimental.

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One day, he bought all the necessary books for his wife to appear for B.A. privately. On seeing a bunch of books, she expressed her surprise. She browsed the books casually and said with a broad smile on her face, 'Why did you buy all these books for me and where is the need for me to study further? Rearing your daughter is a great education for me as a mother.'

By nature Kusuma had a sense of humor. Ever since she was little she had a knack for making people laugh. After their marriage there was a change in her attitude. Her

husband was always serious and did not respond to her joking. He was extraordinarily intelligent. Then why he did not have a sense of humor? Did he know how to laugh and make others laugh?

Till now she had not seen U.G. laughing wholeheartedly at any time. He always appeared to be thinking of something or other seriously, as if heavens were about to fall; or he seemed as if he carried the burden of uplifting humanity. He did not appear natural as others did. Why? What was he seeking? When once he entered his study room he was oblivious to the rest of the world. If he was reading something or writing seriously, he would not answer calls. If he did, it would be only to say absent-mindedly, 'All right, go ahead. Do as you like.' Why was he so absentminded?

It is natural for the husband and wife to share a bed. But U.G. slept alone in his room. When she asked about it, she got no reply from him. It was indeed strange of him. Kusuma was lost in a deep reverie.

'Why Kusuma, I brought all these books for you to study for B.A., and you've become suddenly silent. Look, some day you may have to stand on your own legs and carry on your life. I am like a vagabond. My aspirations, desires and aims are all totally different from others'. I don't know how long we may live together; and as time goes on, we may face hardships. You may have to bring up our children alone. What will you do then? So, to prepare yourself, you must study. The world is changing and we have to adapt to the changing circumstances. The properties we are now enjoying may dry up some day; financial conditions may change, but the value of education will never change,' U.G. said.

Kusuma was stunned. Her mind had become totally blank. She had never imagined that she might have to face such an onerous task. In her heart, she only had sweet ideas and happy dreams. The prince of her dreams had become her husband by the grace of the God, but now he had begun to behave like a stranger in an unbelievably odd fashion. It appeared as though two persons traveling in opposite directions had suddenly collided with each another. Her heart trembled like a tender leaf in a gale and a sense of vacuum engulfed her.

There was an agonizing silence in the room. With a pale face she looked at U.G. in an uneasy manner and said quietly, 'I fail to understand what you are preaching. Why can't we live together? I can't imagine why such terrible incidents would have to occur in the future. I'm not interested in your lofty ideals about freedom, improvement of individual personality, and so on. They are beyond my imagination. Leave me to myself. You are everything to me. I was brought up in a traditional manner; my life will always revolve around you. I need nothing more. You can go wherever you like and carry on your work and activities. That won't be a problem to me and I won't come in your way. But kindly do not speak such ominous words hereafter. I bow to you most humbly and earnestly.' She felt as if she was about to sink into a deep abyss and was struggling to save herself.

'Calm down, Kusuma. Sentimentality is the cause of your fear. What all I mean is that you should learn to gauge, assess and prepare for situations in life as they arise. Take it

easy,' U.G. thus completed his advice in a light manner. He laughed affectionately. At last, he laughed!

'Now what are all these studies for? I am a housewife purely devoted to the family. I am a mother for my child. That gives me total mental satisfaction. I don't want anything else. Let me be happy and content just the way I am. That's the great favor I ask of you,' said Kusuma.

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The President of Theosophical Society, George Arundale, was one of the pillars of the Society. He was an Englishman; he studied Law at Cambridge. In 1902, he listened to the speech given by Annie Besant at Queens Hall in London, which attracted him immensely, and thereupon he had become one of her innumerable disciples. And within a short time, he came to be her favorite disciple.

He taught English in the Central Hindu College which was founded by Annie Besant in Varanasi. Later, he worked as its Principal also. He played a pivotal role in establishing the Besant Educational Trust. Under its auspices, a college was started in Madanapalli, Chittoor District, in the Madras Presidency.

To encourage national education, Arundale also instituted the National University in Adyar with Rabindranath Tagore as Chancellor. Arundale was its Rector.

Annie Besant started a periodical called *New India* in support of independence for India. Arundale worked for it along with Annie Besant. He toured all over India and took part in the Home Rule movement. The British Government arrested both of them.

The marriage with Rukmini Devi in 1920 was a seminal event in Arundale's life. She belonged to a rank traditional Brahmin family in Madras and her marriage caused a great uproar among orthodox people. But the couple brushed aside all opposition and married with the blessings of Annie Besant. It was indeed a revolutionary marriage. Both of them were popular in the Theosophical circles.

Arundale believed that 'Service to humanity is service to God.' People in Adyar knew him as their guide, philosopher humdinger and well-wisher. Everyday, in the evenings, he visited some family or other to enquire about their welfare. He was an effective and eloquent speaker.

Arundale spotted U.G. in his early years. He could gauge U.G.'s latent capabilities. He took U.G. under his wing and nurtured and polished him as a representative of the younger generation. Once, U.G. gathered a heap of information about the life of Rukmini Arundale. He carefully prepared an essay on her and showed a typed copy of it to Arundale. Arundale read the entire essay carefully. He was impressed by the way in which it was prepared. The language was lucid, authoritative and sharp. He complimented U.G.

One day, Arundale sent for U.G. and asked him, 'U.G., will you work as my personal secretary?'

'With great pleasure, Sir! Tell me my duties and I'll start right now,' replied U.G. enthusiastically. Arundale already had a few secretaries working for him.

'Well, U.G., your work is simple. The Theosophical Society receives a number of periodicals everyday. You read all of them and prepare notes on important items for me,' said Arundale. U.G. felt honored.

He started his work briskly. He read all the weekly and monthly periodicals and prepared notes in a succinct style to suit the purposes of Arundale. It was a challenging job and it opened new vistas and visions hither to unknown to him. It opened a window into world politics, economics, literature and other social subjects. He carefully preserved some of the relevant clippings.

U.G.'s mental horizons widened. The information in the periodicals was quite different from that in the books. The periodicals reflected real, social, financial and political conditions of the times and contained information which did not normally appear elsewhere.

For the first time U.G. came across the popular weekly magazine *Time,* published from the United States. U.G. very much liked the way in which the *Time* analyzed and presented news and issues from all over the world.

In those days Walter Lippman and H.V. Calton Borne were renowned journalists and political commentators. Walter Lippman was unparalleled in political analysis. He was predicting events in the war time. But many of his predictions were in fact reversed. Calton Borne was another journalist of repute who wrote a number of essays supporting the presidency of Dewey in the contest between Truman and Dewey. Contrary to his predictions, Truman was elected President. Ignoring realities, Calton still supported Dewey saying 'though defeated, he was the winner.' U.G. was aghast at his biased judgment. U.G. felt that a common man in India was wiser, saner and more realistic than those super journalists who were considered great brains.

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The great patriot and towering freedom fighter, C. Rajagopalachari, popularly known as C.R., participated occasionally in the events of the Theosophical Society. In that context U.G. had the good fortune of becoming closely acquainted with him. C.R. appreciated U.G.'s dynamic personality.

One day, in a meeting held in Gokhale Hall in Madras, U.G. vehemently criticized Mahatma Gandhi in the presence of Rajagopalachari. Then Rajagopalachari humorously remarked quoting a Telugu proverb[69] that although he had started his career in the Society only recently he seemed to have outdone his seniors in his criticism of Gandhi.

George Arundale passed away in Adyar on 12th August 1945. In 1946, Jinarajadasa was unanimously elected President of the Theosophical Society. Raja appointed U.G. as the Joint Secretary of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society (1946–49).

The great philosopher Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan took part in the activities of the Theosophical Society from time to time. U.G.'s intelligence and thirst for philosophical knowledge attracted his attention. He recognized U.G. as someone who was not satisfied with the knowledge given by others and but as one who wanted to acquire independent philosophical knowledge through his own efforts. Incidentally, Dr. Radhakrishnan was one of U.G.'s idols.

* * * *

One day, a meeting was organized under the Presidency of Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer. All the participants were eminent scholars. U.G. was the youngest of all and the last to speak. In his usual manner, he started to speak slowly and increased his fluency gradually. The entire audience was spellbound with rapt attention. After the meeting, Ramaswami Iyer complimented U.G.'s speech: 'The audience was captivated by your speech. Now you have grown to the stature of an eminent speaker.' U.G. was thrilled by his appreciation. Ramaswami Iyer had been his ideal speaker and he practiced oratorical skills with him as a model.

* * * *

On the morning of 10th March, U.G. was browsing *The Hindu* newspaper. On one page, there was a boxed item of news. It was reported it that a temple had been built for Mahatma Gandhi. U.G. was surprised and shocked. What was this? He immediately reacted to it. Should he criticize an extraordinary person whom every Indian reveres? But what was wrong in bringing such an improper and unthinkable action to his notice?

U.G.'s typewriter was immediately put into action. A draft letter was prepared in his mind; then it was written out on the typewriter. After typing it he checked the letter for possible errors. Finding none, he signed the letter and dispatched it instantly.

> Adyar, Madras,
> 10th March 1946
>
> Dear Mahatmaji,
>
> May I invite your attention to the enclosed cutting from *The Hindu* of the 10th March 1946, which, perhaps, you have noticed already?
>
> I am not averse to idolatry. I believe that every citizen in the world must have freedom of conscience and the right to worship his or her ideal in any manner or form that appeals to that individual. But when an institution like a temple or shrine is created for a living person to which the ordinary individual is drawn because of the sanctity attached to it by a large number of devotees, does it not

stifle independent thought and thus perpetuate blind adoration and attachment to form? Our ancestors have made it very clear that it is the spirit behind the form that is worshipped. And the forms depicted by the images in temples are said to be purely symbolic representations of some cosmic idea or principle or ideal of perfection. As such, do you approve of and encourage such endeavors on the part of the admirers to perpetuate your form and ideals for which you stand however admirable and attractive they may be?

Respectfully yours,
U.G. Krishnamurti

After a few days, Mahatma Gandhi reacted seriously. He answered the letter through the periodical *Harijan*:

I read a newspaper cutting sent by a correspondent to the effect that a temple has been erected where my image is being worshipped. This I consider to be a gross form of idolatry. The person who has erected the temple has wasted his resources by misusing them, the villagers who are drawn there are misled, and I am being insulted in that the whole of my life has been caricatured in that temple. The meaning that I have given to worship is distorted. The worship of the *charkha* lies in plying it for a living, or as a sacrifice for ushering in *swaraj*. *Gita* is worshipped not by a parrot-like recitation but by following its teaching. Recitation is good and proper only as an aid to action according to its teaching. A man is worshipped only to the extent that he is followed, not in his weaknesses, but in his strength. Hinduism is degraded when it is brought down to the level of the worship of the image of a living being. No man can be said to be good before his death. After death too, he is good for the person who believes him to have possessed certain qualities attributed to him. As a matter of fact, God alone knows a man's heart. And hence, the safest thing is not to worship any person, living or dead, but to worship perfection which resides only in God, known as Truth. The question then certainly arises as to whether possession of photographs is not a form of worship carrying no merit with it. I have said as much before now in my writings. Nevertheless, I have tolerated the practice, as it has become an innocent though a costly fashion. But this toleration will become ludicrous and harmful if I were to give directly or indirectly the slightest encouragement to the practice above described. It would be a welcome relief, if the owner of the temple removed the image and converted the building into a spinning centre, where the poor will card and spin for wages, and the others for sacrifice, and all will be wearers of *khaddar*. This will be the teaching of the *Gita* in action, and true worship of it and me'[70].

In his spare time the cream of teenagers of the young generation gathered around U.G. He was a role model for them for many reasons: he had an inexhaustible supply of confidence; they liked his way of talking, his gestures and gait which he threw in at every opportunity in graceful profusion; and he had abundant knowledge in almost all subjects including European literature, philosophy, psychology and politics. U.G., in his turn, developed an intuitive empathy with them.

He would say to them that 'Determination to succeed is a prime factor in the achieving success. Fear of failure has defeated many worthy men. Self-confidence is an essential factor in life. Believing in yourself is vital. It could mean the difference between success and failure, fulfillment and frustration. Confidence is a positive attitude which you can cultivate and employ for your goals.'

In the words of U.G.'s cousin Prasad, 'His presence is exhilarating and explosive. It is like the rise of Kundalini.'

* * * *

Kusuma was pregnant again. She went to the town of Tanuku to her elder sister's home for delivery. There she gave birth to another daughter on 10th September 1946, dashing Durgamma's hopes for a grandson. Her second daughter was named Usha Rani.[71] Usha looked like a golden doll and was attractive like a tiny bird. The child was affectionately nicknamed "Bulbul".

When Kusuma came back to Adyar, a maidservant also was sent along with her to help with domestic chores. Three years had elapsed after her marriage, yet she did not learn to cook well. She had no desire to learn it or did she show any interest in it.

* * * *

27. Work for the Theosophical Society

Though U.G. was very busy in Adyar, he tried to find some time to organize activities in Paravidyasram in Gudiwada. A number of people who were interested in these programs attended the meetings there. U.G. answered their questions.

A public lecture of his, on the topic of "Philosophy for Our Times," was held on 25th July 1946 at 6:15 pm. The local gentry graced the occasion. All of U.G.'s friends and admirers occupied the front row. Somanchi Lingaraju, the translator from Eluru, adorned the dais along with special invitees. After the customary introductions, U.G. spoke of how 'Philosophy should be part of everyone's life and life ought to be the part of Philosophy. Both are intertwined; they are not separate. That is the true meaning "life of philosophy".'

* * * *

Though U.G. was fully occupied with the programs of the Theosophical Society, his mind was haunted with his original question: Is there Absolute Truth? Is there a real state of salvation by knowing which nothing else needs to be known? Like the wheel of a potter, these fundamental questions revolved in his mind constantly.

He thought to himself:

'I shall not follow with any rules rigidly. I don't have any boundaries. I shall continue my unknown arduous journey towards my goal by assessing everything through deep observation and investigation, logically, in a realistic manner.

Now I'm married and I'm a father of two children. I have family responsibilities, on the one hand, and the programs of the Theosophical Society, on the other. I sincerely wish to continue my search by fulfilling all my responsibilities as a householder. Yet, I shall be freely approachable to one and all in the society, in a non–traditional manner.

I will accept whatever befalls me in course of time. I don't want to live like a water drop on a lotus leaf. Everything should be experienced and life must be like that of a "perfect yogi", yet as a householder. I shall continue to live without being bogged down by anything.

I have to prove a point for myself, not for others. If "Absolute Truth" really exists, it should not be confined to a few chosen individuals.'

* * * * * * * * * * *

Jinarajadasa, the President of the Theosophical Society appointed U.G. as the National Speaker. In this capacity U.G. proved himself to be a topnotch orator. His dashing nature and skill of intellectual expression elevated him to that coveted position.

He was asked to tour different universities extensively, three months in a year, keeping Varanasi as his center, and address students on their campuses. This activity perfectly suited his wanderlust nature.

He left his family in Gudiwada and proceeded to Varanasi by train. The great Theosophist Rohit Mehta had been working there. U.G. knew him well as an eminent worker. Both had good rapport with each other.

U.G. reported to Rohit Mehta for duty and started his addresses at Banaras Hindu University, which was a brain child of Anne Besant. On that day, the auditorium was jam-packed. U.G. addressed the students for about an hour-and-a-half on the topic of "What does society expect from the youth?" His fluent speech thrilled the students and the hall reverberated with applause for two minutes.

In the evenings, U.G. strolled on the banks of the River Ganges every day. He watched the surroundings. A number of ochre-robed ascetics were offering their religious vespers. They renounced everything in their lives and dedicated their lives to the service of God.

U.G. watched their facial expressions. To his eyes these wandering mendicants appeared more sincere, dedicated and sublime than the heads of monasteries who spent their lives snugly, eating sumptuously while living in the *ashrams*. The lives of these ascetics were truly reflective of a philosophy of life which had no security of knowing where their next meal came from.

U.G. appreciated the purity of heart, honesty and dedication of these ascetics. They were an embodiment of a spiritual ethos and of self-abnegation. They lived in the society but were not attached to it. They were the ones who penetrated deeply into the recesses of the spiritual life. They were the real representatives of a Stoic way of life. But these people did not have the media to publicize them.

The professors of philosophy in the universities had a number of titles and honors. They merely spoke the philosophy which they had gathered from the textbooks. Their lives were shallow. U.G. felt that he learned more from the lives of the ascetics on the banks of Ganges than from the professors. Even his grandmother Durgamma was more conversant in philosophy than the doctorate-holding professors of philosophy.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Banaras was famous all over India for its silk saris. U.G. purchased a few expensive ones for his wife. He visited different universities in North India and addressed their students. After three months, he returned to Adyar.

When U.G. presented the saris to his wife, her face turned pale and she grumbled. The colors of the saris were awkward, gaudy and outlandish and did not match her body complexion. 'If I wear these saris I would be look like a scarecrow,' she muttered.

U.G. said, 'I thought they would beautify your striking personality.' She instantly replied, 'You enjoy carnal pleasure by merely looking at my face, do you? But...' Whenever U.G. purchased saris for her, he failed to impress her. At last, she said, 'For God's sake, don't buy any more saris for me.'

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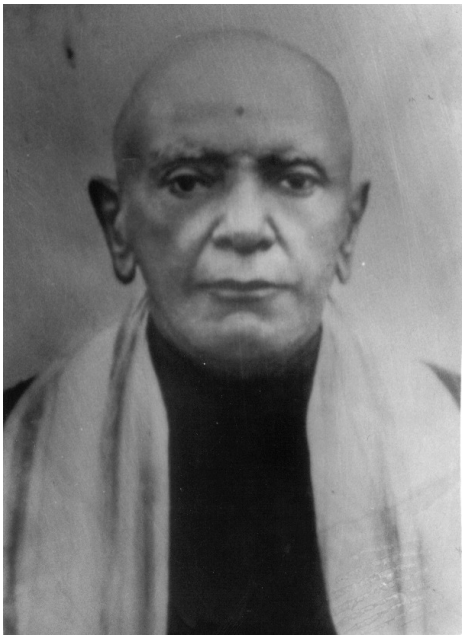
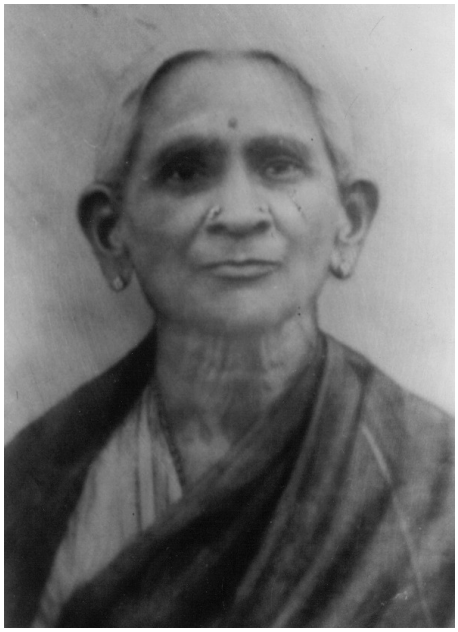
Photos

Uppaluri Seetharamaiah
U.G.'s Father
(Photo Courtesy : Mallapragada Bharatamma)

Uppaluri Bharatamma
U.G.'s Mother



Tummalapalli Gopala Krishnamurti (Pantulu)
U.G.'s Grandfather



Tummalapalli Durgamma
U,.G.'s Grandmother

(Photo Courtesy : V. Narasimha Rao)

The earliest photo of U.G. along with his grand parents
(May be 1935 to 1936)

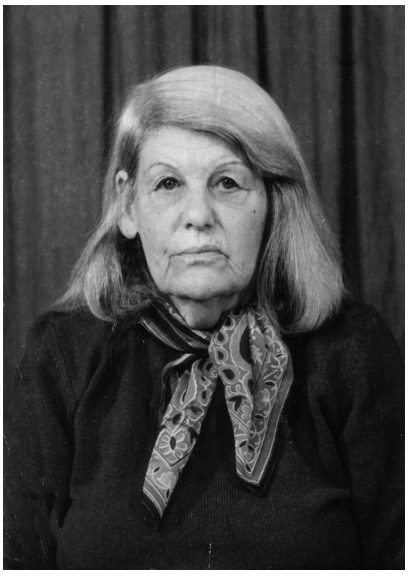
U.G. in the year 1950

V.Narasimha Rao
U.G.'s younger cousin

U.G.'s Grandmother Durgamma with Rukmini Arundale, 1943

Ammanabrolu Minakshamma
U.G.'s Elder Cousin

(Photo Courtesy : Her Daughter Bharatamma)



Valentine de Kervin

(Photo Courtesy : K. Chandrasekhar)

28. Dialogues with J. Krishnamurti

The Theosophical Society nurtured Jiddu Krishnamurti as a divine incarnation or chosen vehicle of God. Its leaders desired to make him the World Teacher, which title, to the astonishment of one and all, he declined. He did not approve the traditional path or any organized systems. He came out as a "free thinker" in his own original way, from a totally different dimension. He unfurled the revolutionary flag in the spiritual arena. He became a lode-star of the spiritual firmament that attracted thousands of Truth seekers. He undertook peregrinations to the four corners of the globe like a whirlwind and started awakening some serious-minded people.

He declared in his historical speech dissolving the Order of the Star of the East, a huge spiritual organization of world repute exclusively meant to be his platform, that 'Truth is a pathless land,' and 'cannot be organized to lead or to coerce people along any particular path.' He said, 'The moment you follow someone you cease to follow truth.' He added, 'When you look for an authority to lead you to spirituality, you are bound automatically to build an organization, which, you think, will help this authority to lead you to spirituality, you are held in a cage.'

He said:

> ... my purpose is to make men unconditionally free, for I maintain that the only spirituality is the incorruptibility of the self, which is eternal, is the harmony between reason and love. This is the absolute, unconditioned Truth, which is Life itself. I want therefore to set man free, rejoicing as the bird in the clear sky, unburdened, independent, ecstatic in that freedom. And I, for whom you have been preparing for eighteen years, now say that you must be free of all these things, free from your complications, your entanglements. For this you need not have an organization based on spiritual belief. Why have an organization for five or ten people in the world who understand, who are struggling, who have put aside all trivial things? And for the weak people, there can be no organizations to help them to find the Truth, because Truth is in everyone; it is not far, it is not near; it is eternally there.
>
> Organizations cannot make you free. No man from outside can make you free; nor can organized worship, nor the immolation of yourselves for a cause, make you free; nor can forming yourselves into an organization, nor throwing yourselves into works, make you free. ...
>
> Again, you have the idea that only certain people hold the key to the Kingdom of Happiness. No one holds it. No one has the authority to hold that key. That key is your own self, and in the development and the purification and in the incorruptibility of that self alone is the Kingdom of Eternity.
>
> ....
>
> * * * * * * * * * * *

It was announced that after the Second World War Krishnaji was to visit Madras in 1947. In order to welcome him, a number of intellectuals, spiritual aspirants, and

admirers from the Theosophical Society came to the Central Station. U.G. was among them. They were informed that the train was running late. After waiting for an hour, U.G. left. Later, the train arrived and Krishnaji received a hearty welcome.

Krishnaji was put up as a guest of R. Madhavachari on Sterling Road. Many paid a visit to him. U.G. also visited him.

Krishnaji had well-chiseled features. He was chubby with a pleasing countenance, a golden-bronze complexion like the first rays of the sun and silken-smooth skin. His eyes were dark and deep like the bottom of the valley, alive, liquid, luminous and moving like crystal marbles. They were inquisitive, piercing, probing and charming. An infectious smile was his scoring point. His thick hair was jet black on the evenly shaped head which looked like a Greek sculpture. His nose beam was even. His ears were big, broad and elongated like the ornately carved stone figures of a Hindu temple. His forehead was broad and solid.

The whole ambience in the room was pristinely pure, serene, profound, soothing, ethereal, seraphic, mystical and preternatural. A spiritual glow emanated from his radiant personality as if he descended from a different world which was unknowable, imponderable, intangible and inaccessible. He looked enchantingly remote, distant, untouched and inscrutable. To be with him was to be in the timeless.

Krishnaji was cheerful and enthusiastic and spoke to some persons who were known to him previously. He bowed to the new visitors in a humble manner. People commented that Krishnaji was not seen so joyful or sprightly at any time earlier. They thought that he appeared so lively because of the recent independence of our country.

After sometime, Krishnaji said in a clear voice, 'Gentlemen, the responsibility of reconstructing a new India is vested with all of us. It is our bounden duty. The entire nation should be awakened; it is time for everyone to transform it completely. A great opportunity is at our hands. It is a cumulative effort. Just as a mansion is built brick by brick, the entire country should be rebuilt with perseverance and dedication.'

Krishnaji addressed the visitors in a passionate way, kindling the spirits of his listeners. Everyone came under his magic spell. U.G. heard him attentively. After an hour U.G. returned to Adyar.

* * * *

On 30th January 1948, Mahatma Gandhi had become a victim to the bullets of Nathuram Godsey. The whole country mourned his death. U.G. was then in Adyar. On the same day, the wife of Vemuri Narasimha Rao had died in Machilipatnam. U.G. came to know of it and went to Machilipatnam to console his cousin, thinking that he could also discuss some property matters with him while he was there.

U.G.'s friends and acquaintances came to see him. He enquired about his old time secretary, Venkata Rao and was informed that he had settled somewhere after his Intermediate. He also learned that there was not much activity in the functioning of the

debating society which he had established long ago. He gave some suggestions for improvement.

A whole week passed but Narasimha Rao did not return from his in–laws' place. U.G. was a little annoyed. As per his grandfather's will, Narasimha Rao also inherited part of his property. U.G. had been thinking for some time of cashing in his share of the property at Gudiwada. He had no interest in immovable properties. He believed that all assets should be liquid.

Normally, if U.G. took a decision, he acted instantly without any delay. U.G. was staying with Chinnayya Rao, father of Narasimha Rao. One day, U.G. asked him. 'Uncle, how is that Narasimham has stayed over so long? I sent a message to him that I have been waiting here. Why hasn't he returned yet?' He was getting impatient.

'I don't' know U.G., he said he would come back soon. He has a three year-old daughter. She is attached to him. Perhaps she did not allow him to leave,' said Chinnayya Rao.

'Sorry, *Annayya*, I have received your message; but due to some circumstances, I could not come back earlier. I apologize for the delay,' said Narasimha Rao as soon as he stepped in. U.G. was pleased to see him. After expressing his condolences for his wife's death, U.G. asked, 'Are you free to come with me to Gudiwada? I wish to settle some property matters. Let me know your views in the matter.'

'I am ready to follow you. I don't have any special views in our family matters. I am agreeable to any proposals you will put forth,' replied Narasimha Rao amiably.

* * *

By the time they two arrived at their home in Gudiwada, Durgamma was sitting alone leisurely, reciting verses from *Adhyatma Ramayana*. She was surprised by their sudden visit without notice. In the course of conversation, she came to learn, to her utter grief, that they were there to divide the properties and sell away the lands.

The next day, they opened the iron safe and found the documents and other items. They also discovered in a hidden shelf a brown envelope labeled "Confidential". U.G. opened it. It contained the Kaumara Nadi predictions Pantulu had obtained in Madras in 1925. U.G. had tried earlier a number of times to locate the reading, but in vain.

The documents were very clear on property matters. There were two fixed assets: the present house and Krishna Nivas, the building with its attached shops.

'Narasimham, you know my lifestyle. I am like a spiritual wandering Jew. I don't want to own any properties. In future, I'm not going to come and stay in this house at all. You'd better take it for yourself. In exchange, I'll have the Krishna Nivas building, if that's agreeable to you,' enquired U.G. Narasimha Rao agreed. Durgamma was informed about the division of properties. She neither opposed the settlement nor accepted it.

Since his childhood Narasimha Rao had a great fascination for U.G. as they grew together for some years. He nicknamed U.G. "the Prince of Machilipatnam". He was closely associated with him in the Paravidyasram activities.

In addition to his grandfather's property, U.G. had inherited his mother's property also. That inheritance was 25 acres of land. U.G. wanted to sell it off as early as possible. He sent for his friend Venkata Subbaiah.

U.G. explained the property details to him in detail and said, 'Subbu, I want to sell away Krishna Nivas and the shopping complex. Please find the market rate and settle on the selling price, give or take a thousand. But remember it should be a cash-down transaction. What would you say?'

'Certainly, it's no problem at all. Whenever we announce the sale, it will be sold in no time for cash payment, as you wish. People are there waiting in line, I can assure you,' said Subbaiah.

'Well, now, as regards the lands, instead of selling them to outsiders, I wish to sell them to the lessees. Send for them, but let me know the market rate first,' cautioned U.G. Subbaiah nodded in agreement.

U.G.'s relatives came to know of the proposed sale of land. They rushed to him to advise against the idea: 'U.G. you are committing a grave mistake. Your lands are fertile and are like a gold mine. Keep them and you would get rich dividends every year wherever you may be. If you are pressed for money, sell the shops but not the lands at any cost. This is our sincere advice.'

Surprisingly U.G. did not respond. He heard their arguments patiently as if he respected their sentiments. After a pause, he said coolly, 'I will think over the matter. Many thanks for your genuine advice.'

They did not know that U.G. had already made an irrevocable decision. The next day, Subbaiah brought a buyer for the purchase of Krishna Nivas and the annexed shops. They agreed on a price of 30,000 rupees and the agreement papers were signed. An advance amount was paid and both sides agreed that the rest would be paid at the time of registration. Since his property sharing issue was settled, Narasimha Rao left for Machilipatnam. Later, Subbaiah informed U.G. of the prevailing market value of the lands.

One fine day, all the farmers who rented land from U.G.'s grandfather came to see U.G. U.G. could recognize Bhushayya, the hoary head of them. Unrelenting time had taken its toll on him. U.G. offered him a chair respecting his old age.

After a pause, U.G. said, 'I am offering my land for sale. Will you buy them?' They all became quiet. Buy land? But how?

'Why are you quiet? Are you interested in my land or not? Please don't hesitate to speak,' U.G. pressed on.

After a pause, Bhushayya cautiously said, dropping his voice to a whisper, 'Young master, you know our financial position well. We earn our daily bread by toiling every hour. We don't have any resources at our disposal. How can we have so much money to buy your lands?'

'Oh, I see, is that the problem?' asked U.G. Everyone nodded. U.G. kept quiet for a minute and addressing Bhushayya spoke in a gentle tone, 'All right, I can understand your problem,' he paused for a few seconds and then continued, 'keeping your difficulties in view, I'm giving you a concession. You all know the market value, don't you? Now you can buy my lands at three-quarters of that rate. Another important condition: you will give me a tenth of the sale price as an advance. The rest can be remitted before the end of the year to my bank account. Decide for yourselves if this deal is convenient to you.'

All their faces wore a stunned look.

'So, what do you say?' U.G. demanded.

At last Bhushayya stood up and gazing eyes into U.G.'s face ecstatically, said politely, 'Sir, we will all accept your offer most gratefully. Would we reject a gift offered so gracefully? We will manage and fulfill your instructions.'

Bhushayya proceeded to touch U.G.'s feet. U.G. immediately prevented it. 'No, no, I don't like this manner. You are elder to me and I have to respect you. I am like your son; please don't touch my feet,' U.G. said holding both his hands.

Bhushayya nevertheless prostrated himself on the ground and touched his eyes with his hands as a sign of reverence to mother earth. A faint semblance of a suppressed smile flickered over his lips. One by one, the lessees left in high spirits; the magic moments were over.

By moving heaven and earth, the farmers gathered the required advance amount of 5,625 rupees and gave it to U.G. The necessary agreements were signed. Subbaiah undertook the responsibility to see that the balance was paid within the year. Once again, they all bowed their heads folding their hands together and left the scene without showing their backs.

After that, Subbaiah remarked to U.G., 'I knew Bhushayya very well. He is a man of his word and is a son of the soil. He will keep his promise; that I can assure you.'

Some of U.G.'s relatives and well-wishers rushed to him posthaste to admonish him. Normally U.G. is accustomed to deliver lengthy speeches and not to hear them from others. However, he kept his cool. After a while U.G. said coolly:

> Well, from my grandfather's younger days they have been toiling in the fields and were paying their share of their agreement, whether they had anything left over for themselves or not. I know they suffered often. Years passed, yet there

> has not been an iota of change in their lives. Hard labor is their only inheritance. For three generations their lives have been entombed in those lands; yet they never raised their voices in protest.
>
> I don't regret nor do I have any remorse for what I have done. I am not interested in politics or social justice, but I strongly believe that land always should belong to the tiller, not to others. All these years we have enjoyed the fruits of their labor. Now I want to re-write their fate. I thank you for your feelings. Bye, bye.

His relatives considered his views strange and unpalatable. Some of them derisively commented, 'We have a new communist in our midst.'

To everyone's surprise, the cultivators, under the leadership of Bhushayya, remitted the remaining 50,000 rupees within six months. They could glean and gather enough resources by selling away whatever valuables they had in their households. They fulfilled their trust reposed in them by U.G. The lands of the Tummalapalli family now belonged to others.

* * * * *

Once again, Durgamma was left all alone like an ancient oak tree that had witnessed many a storm yet still stood tall. She had been the fabulous empress of her house. She had wielded supreme power behind the throne. Now she had no empire and no emperor. Once, this house was a veritable beehive of spiritual, philosophical and religious activities. It was agog and aglow with children, guests, relatives and servants. Now they were all gone, never to come back. Only the memories remained with her.

Durgamma was conversant in sacred literature. Over the years she developed a philosophy of her own. Great religious scholars were baffled by her erudition. After all, she only knew her own mother tongue. She lived in her body and soul as housewife, mother, grandmother and hostess with a spirit of total devotion. She felt a throb of joy in ministering to one and all. Her philosophical outlook seemed to be her highest point of satisfaction and contentment. Yet she felt lonely, frustrated and forlorn in spite of her own living philosophy. A load of grief and inner turmoil seemed to envelop her now and then.

It is the paradox of human life that Durgamma's thoughts turned to U.G., the darling of her heart. Fortunately for her, Narasimha Rao accepted her house; otherwise, instead of Krishna Nivas, U.G. would have sold away the house. Everything she and her husband had accumulated over many decades, a huge property, was just sold away right before her eyes in a short time. 'Ramudu is a heartless butcher. He has no human sentiments,' she bemoaned.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

U.G. was busy with Theosophical Society activities. Over a period of time he developed a hyperbolic and pompous style of oratory. Now he was regarded as one of the eminent

speakers. He toured in Northern India again on behalf of the Theosophical Society visiting different universities as National Speaker and addressing students. He toured in South India also and addressed the students of Andhra and Osmania Universities.

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In 1949, U.G. visited America for the first time as a representative of the Theosophical Society. He participated in several meetings in various cities. He hobnobbed with stalwarts of the Society there. On his return journey, he landed in London. After a few days, he proceeded to Switzerland, his favorite Shangri-la. He toured extensively some interesting places and touched on Zurich. He came to know that Carl Gustav Jung, the famous psychoanalyst, was living there.

Jung had a great fascination and admiration for India and its spiritual lore. His grandfather worked in India as a missionary for several years. When Jung came to India he met several spiritual people. He was stationed in Varanasi for several months and met many Sanskrit scholars and discussed spiritual matters with them. Jung coined a special spiritual lingo called "synchronicity" which became very popular among spiritual circles throughout the world. The idea of synchronicity is that life is a series of fateful meetings and not coincidences. Synchronicity suggests that there is an interconnection or unity among the otherwise casually unrelated events.

U.G. went directly to Jung's place and introduced himself. Jung was pleased to receive him. They discussed several topics at length.

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Within a week after he returned from abroad U.G. developed a fever. Gradually the fever turned into typhoid. For a whole month he was laid in the Madras General Hospital in a special ward. His brother-in-law, Dr. Seshagiri Rao, attended on him. U.G. was annoyed at being bedridden for such a longtime and felt that a life in prison would have been better.

His wife Kusuma was pregnant a third time. Still, she was taking care of U.G. day and night. Durgamma and Narasimha Rao came to Madras to see him and remained there for some time.

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Kusuma gave birth to a son in Madras in 1949. U.G. named him Vasanta Kumar. He did not express any jubilance when his son was born. But Kusuma was thrilled to the hilt over the prospect of the continuation of the Uppaluri family.

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In the month of November 1949, Krishnaji came to Madras from Ojai, California. From the last week of November, he was in Rajahmundry for 15 days on the banks of the River Godavari in Andhra and addressed public gatherings. It was said that

Krishnaji had a great liking for the Andhra Mango pickle called *avakaya.* The pickle was specially prepared by a Brahmin family in Rajahmundry for him every year for his use in Madras.

Whenever Krishnaji came to Madras, he gave discourses at Vasant Vihar. U.G. attended the meetings. He had a great respect and admiration for Krishnaji. Yet he had a number of doubts about him. He had no belief in the talk that Krishnaji was a divine incarnation or chosen vehicle of God. U.G. also questioned the fame that Krishnaji was a World Teacher. He thought, 'World teachers are born that way and not prepared for the slot. No, this is absolute rubbish.'

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In 1948, when Krishnaji gave "private" talks in the month of April, U.G. went and listened to his talks intently, not as a rookie but with an all-consuming inner fire, with a spirit of inquiry, yet full of doubt.

By this time, U.G. was transformed into a challenging full-fledged and accomplished "truth seeker" in his own right. He had absolutely no faith in anyone or anything. Faith cannot be cultivated. It is an inborn trait, a special disposition. It is also an escape from reality. It may be soothing but it blinds one to many things. And one cannot persuade someone who questions everything to cultivate faith.

At a certain point, U.G. ruthlessly decimated spiritual effluvium of all kinds. All philosophical and psychological shibboleths from the East as well the West were buried, never to raise their ugly head again. As an independent pathfinder and truth seeker, he developed his own style and system of ideas which are logical, radical, practical and sometimes revolutionary.

There was a strong streak of original, profound and innovative thinking in him. He gained rich and rewarding experience, not by reading books, though he was regarded as a walking encyclopedia, but by minutely observing men and matters from close quarters.

He had become downright blunt. Over the years he had acquired a self-propelling power to face any challenge or critical situation. As he hobnobbed with intellectual giants, he always found himself a comfort zone with any bigwigs anywhere in the world.

He had a flamboyant flair for arguments and counterarguments. Ideas would come to him spontaneously at jet speed. He was ruled by the mind rather than by the heart. The sky was the limit for U.G.

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There were some books in the Star Publications about Krishnaji. U.G. read all of them. A French National, Carlo Suarès, had a great fascination for Krishnaji. He moved closely with him and in 1934 and published his *magnum opus* called *Krishnamurti* in French. Later the book was translated into English. Many of Krishnaji admirers regarded it as a mirror of his line of thinking.

According to Krishnaji, Suarès writes,

> There is an unconditioned, absolute Truth, which is Life itself. This living Truth is dynamic, positive, moving, it is the eternal Now, the Present which never ceases to renew itself, to be born of itself every instant.
>
> The present is in all things. All is real. But in this real world, men attribute illusory values to things, because, instead of perceiving the present moment, they place between the Now and themselves, as they would a background, their illusory "I", with its innumerable creations. Their individual consciousness is made up only of acquisitions of the past. The "I" can be made of nothing else but the past; therefore it cannot enter the Present, which is the only Eternity. That which it calls its future is merely, in its imagination, a projection of its past. The ego has no future.
>
> The state of knowledge is a state in which man has freed himself from his past, which is self-consciousness. However paradoxical it may seem at first, such a state is the only one, which is natural to man, really worthy of that name. Everything that belongs to the "I" is as yet sub-human. When man is free from his "I" he has released his faculties of mind and of emotion. They are blended now into pure action which is an impersonal adaptation to the present and that action is both love and reason, it is intuition.

Suarès observes:

> The man and his message are alike. Both are at the same time present and absent. Very simply present, and absent in an indescribable manner, but which is well known to those who have tried liberation. This absence is precisely the absence of self, within the bounds of which everyone else is on the contrary firmly established.
>
> What is the nature of this absence, which yet is a presence? For the thousands of people who have come near him, it is obvious that Krishnamurti is astonishingly human. Human in the simplest and most immediate sense. Thousands of people have the feeling that Krishnamurti is their most intimate friend, the one who loves them best, who understands them best. Therefore, every one of them feels entitled to believe that he shares with him some special affinities. Krishnamurti, as understood by X...or by Y...is always, invariably, a pure and simple emanation of X...or Y... who ascribe to him their own ideas and opinions. Two people, who together, are talking with him, have both entirely different conceptions of his "ideas" and his "opinions". The more one feels him accessible, the more he becomes universal.

U.G. read this book carefully. As a Theosophist there were several questions in his mind which were left unanswered. The older generation was reluctant and completely silent as if there were forbidden to answer. No one was prepared to blow the gaffe. Why was it so? What was the mystery behind all this?

What was the "Truth" experienced by Krishnaji? Was it through practice that he had experienced it? Or did he attain the mental transformation simply by doubting everything? In what state of being Krishnaji had been while he was giving his discourses? How could he attain that Truth?

U.G. criticized Krishnaji openly in his talks. The stalwarts of Theosophical Society never criticized Krishnaji overtly. They were surprised at U.G.'s logical criticisms leveled against Krishnaji. Some others thought that some Theosophists were behind U.G.'s attacks.

'A theosophist by name U.G. Krishnamurti is criticizing you sharply,' complained someone to Krishnaji. He did not respond. After some days, some one complained again. Krishnaji smiled and enquired, 'What did he say? Why?' They could not answer him satisfactorily. Krishnaji remained silent and smiled mysteriously.

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U.G. ordered an electric heater and a pressure cooker from Ceylon. He also purchased a Rukmini Brand cooker for fast cooking. They had a cook by name Saraswati and a girl servant to look after the children. There was another servant to clean clothes and wash dishes. There was an errand boy named Arumugam to attend to U.G.'s needs. Life ran smoothly for U.G. and his family.

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The All India Science Congress was organized in Poona. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, presided over the Congress. Its meetings went on for three days and U.G. attended them on behalf of the Theosophical Society.

Kamala Kumari, the eldest sister of Kusuma lived in Poona. Her husband, Nidamarthi Gopala Krishna was a horticulturist in the State Government.

Kamala's life was an adventurous one. After her marriage, she sold away all her gold jewelry to support her husband's higher studies in Poona. After he completed his studies they settled in Poona. With great perseverance and grit Kamala Kumari completed her B.A. degree and later studied law. She practiced law.

U.G. stayed with them while he attended the Science Congress. Later, he visited the Theosophical Society branch in Poona and interacted with its members. After a few days he returned to Madras.

In 1950, U.G. came to know that his paternal grandfather, Uppaluri Venkatappayya had passed away in Machilipatnam at the age of 85. The adventurous life of Venkatappayya came to a close. U.G. wrote a letter of condolence to his father Sitaramayya.

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29. World Lecture Tour

U.G. started a new phase of his life. As an eminent orator he was much sought after in Theosophical circles. He went on a world tour as a National Speaker. He spoke on different platforms throughout the world.

At London, the Theosophical Society was celebrating its anniversary. Jinarajadasa presided and U.G. was a principal participant in the function. There were five hundred people in the audience from all walks of life, including some of London's intelligentsia.

U.G. spoke for about forty five minutes in a lucid manner. The whole audience was enthralled as if by a magic spell. Raja, who nurtured U.G. earlier, paid him the highest compliments.

Later, U.G. visited Ireland, Rome, Amsterdam, Paris, Oslo and Brussels.

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When U.G. was out of India, his family stayed most of the time in Adyar. He made all the necessary arrangements to take care of the needs of the family in his prolonged absence.

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The bird hovers in the sky in high skies but it will not forget its nest or offspring on a tree. Similarly, U.G., despite his hectic schedule with the ever-increasing programs of the Theosophical Society in India or abroad, did not forget his responsibility to his family. He appeared to others to be negligent, as some rumors to that effect were circulated among his relatives.

In fact, these vague rumors gained credence by Kusuma's unwitting remarks. She was totally opposed to the Theosophical Society and her husband's roaming activities. It seems that she quipped once to someone in a lighter vein that 'U.G. has two wives – the wedded wife and then the Theosophical Society.'

U.G. had great affection for his children. But he never exhibited it openly nor did he pamper them. He had his own opinions about raising children: He believed that children should be helped to grow freely and naturally in their own way. There must not be any pressure or coercion on their minds in the name of rules and discipline. U.G. was opposed to punishing or terrifying children. Children have their own innate mental abilities and make up. They must be understood and treated accordingly. Their likes and dislikes must be respected. Rights and wrongs must be explained to them patiently. They must not be brought up in a pompous manner. Simplicity is the gospel truth. Parents need to function as a ladder for their children. Providing a three-wheeler to a child who is learning to walk is harmful to its natural growth. A child must learn to walk independently without any support. Being active and mischievous is natural to children and it is their birthright. It is an outlet for their joy and energy.

U.G. had a great appreciation for the famous Lebanese mystic poet Khalil Gibran's excellent poem on children:

> Your children are not your children.
>
> They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
> They come through you but not from you,
> And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.
>
> You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
> For they have their own thoughts.
>
> You may house their bodies but not their souls,
> For their souls dwell in the house of to-morrow,
> Which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
> You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.
>
> For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.
>
> You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

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One day, U.G. was seriously reading a book in his room. Outside his room, his daughter Bharati was shouting and making noise. Kusuma was busy somewhere in the house and did not pay any attention to the noise. U.G.'s concentration was disturbed. He got angry and came out of the room to thrash Bharati.

Suddenly, his childhood days flashed in his mind. He recalled how, at the age of seven, his grandfather had beaten him with a belt, and how he snatched the belt and started beating his grandfather to everyone's astonishment. He immediately controlled himself and went back into his room. Later on, he never paid any attention to the noise they would make.

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Ever since he had been conscious, U.G. was brought up in a suffocating spiritual atmosphere. Gradually, as time elapsed, he became a seeker of Truth. Renouncing all earthly pleasures and observing purity of thought, word and deed he wanted to be a celibate and finally an ascetic.

But fate had other plans. He agreed to marry mainly to please his maternal grandparents. Strangely, after three days of conjugal bliss, he was disappointed and felt that he had committed a huge mistake. However, he started his life as a responsible householder. He had children and the bond of marriage became stronger. Then he thought that the life of a householder could not be a hindrance or obstacle for the search of Truth. Now he wanted to prove to himself that his assumption was correct.

Family life is not a bed of roses. One has to face problems and make adjustments as the situation warrants. Wife and husband have to have an understanding of each other. If either partner's aspirations and estimations go awry, life will not be smooth for either of them.

U.G. had an abiding passion for the development of individuality in his wife. He always dinned into her ears year after year that a woman is not just a child-bearing machine, that she is not a bonded slave of man and that she should think and live independently. He encouraged her to develop self-confidence to move freely in society without timidity. In spite of Kusuma's unwillingness, he persuaded her to complete her B.A. Degree successfully.

Kusuma adored her husband. In her view, marriage is a lifetime sacred bond which could not be separated till death. She strongly believed that the relationship with her husband was the fruit of her virtuous deeds in her previous lives. She was in fact infatuated with him. The couple shared an amicable chemistry in the matter of sex. They both had an abiding passion. And both enjoyed their conjugal bliss amicably without any inhibitions.

Once, Kusuma asked her husband, 'You are very handsome and attractive and are also an intellectual. You are surrounded by many beautiful girls. Have you ever thought of having affairs with them?' U.G. appreciated her frank question. He laughed and said, 'I never succumbed to the lure of pretty girls, though they are readily available. If I yield once there will be no end. It is not only dangerous to you but also to me. It does not fit in my scheme of things.'

U.G. had a lifestyle of simplicity. He was opposed to pageantry and high ostentation. However, he never imposed his lifestyle on his wife. He tried to inculcate some of its finer points which she never implemented, in spite of his best efforts.

There were minor cracks in their relationship. A kind of cold war ensued for sometime. Kusuma had a serious question in her mind: 'He is a high intellectual and a great orator. Many people consider him a genius; he is liked by one and all. Well, then, why don't I feel him as a great husband?'

U.G.'s patience slowly ebbed away. When he went on his tours he always left enough money with her. He took care of every detail in a meticulous manner. But one time, when U.G. was out of focus, Kusuma spent the money lavishly. There had been old chairs and tables in the house. In their place she ordered new furniture and decorated the doors and windows with fancy curtains. And she bought odd-color nylon clothes for her children.

On return from his foreign junket, U.G. noticed the changes. He became terribly disappointed and depressed. He got wild and shouted at his wife, 'I told you umpteen times that I like simplicity and nothing but simplicity. But you never listened. Is this a home or a movie set? I'm sorry Kusuma!' He then swung into action and had all the furniture transported in a truck to an auction hall. The curtains and clothes for the children for which Kusuma had a fancy were thrown out and burnt by Arumugam.

Children huddled together petrified by their father's anger. Kusuma kept quiet, as her mind went totally blank. A month after this incident, Kusuma requested her brother Dr. Seshagiri Rao, who was working at Madras General Hospital, to send two cots. As he had two extra cots, he transported them to Adyar. Upon knowing this, U.G. immediately got them sent back to his brother-in-law's house. He went to the market and purchased a big expensive cot. He loathed begging anything from others, especially from someone in his in-laws' family. He was always at loggerheads with them for unknown reasons. It was said, 'He had a great fancy to reject any gift from them including gold ornaments. He ruthlessly disposed them off in no time.' No one could understand his mind.

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On one occasion, the couple quarreled and Kusuma went away with her children to her brother, Dr. Seshagiri Rao's house in the heat of the moment. For two days she expected that her husband would come to plead with her to come home. She assumed that he would not be able to bear the separation; she thought that he would rush to her at least for the sake of the children. But to her utter dismay, U.G. did not turn up even after a week. There was no sign of any reaction from him. She was cruelly disappointed and her ego was punctured.

Dr. Seshagiri Rao pacified his sister and took her along with the children back to Adyar. At the time of her arrival U.G. was there. He kept silent and did not react or express any annoyance at the absence of his wife.

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U.G. landed in Gudiwada on 1st October 1952. On the spur of the moment he thought of conducting a public meeting in Paravidyasram. Immediately pamphlets were printed and distributed. The lecture was on "New Worlds for Old". The meeting was presided over by Professor A. F. Thyagaraju, Principal of Gudiwada College. Many from the Theosophical Society in Madras graced the occasion. As usual Somanchi Lingaraju was invited to translate U.G.'s speech into Telugu.

U.G. ventilated his views vehemently as if he was possessed by a cosmic power. He spoke about an hour and a half. The expert translator fumbled several times in his attempt to catch up with the torrential flow of U.G.'s words.

This was the last meeting of U.G. in Gudiwada as National Lecturer of the Theosophical Society.

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Years rolled by and the continuum of time moves on...on.... and on, eternally.

U.G. was busy as usual with Theosophical activities. He toured Japan from where he brought fine toys for his children to their delight. Family life was jogging along smoothly. Then an altogether new turn of events occurred in U.G.'s life. An extraordinary phenomenon subtly touched his life from an unexpected quarter.

30. Tragedy at Home

On that day, Narasimha Rao's elder sister Rajyalakshmi, who was well-known for her "auto- writing", paid a short visit to Madras along with her children. She wrote mind-boggling philosophical tracts through her auto-writing, to the astonishment of everyone. Many believed that an unknown divine power operated through her.

In the evening, she and U.G.'s family all got ready to go to the beach. Kusuma left her son Vasant in the care of the servant maid Lakshmi and went to the beach along with the others. They enjoyed their time on the beach and returned home at night on a happy note.

The servant maid met Kusuma at the gate and informed her that Vasant had a fever and was motionless. Immediately Kusuma ran to the cradle and looked at the boy. He appeared not to be breathing. His eyes were deeply sunken. Kusuma was petrified and picked up the child. His body was hot.

Meanwhile, Arumugam went and fetched U.G. who sent for the local doctor. The doctor examined the child and said that it was some viral fever, nothing to worry about. He assured that the child would recover slowly. He gave some medicines and left.

Kusuma spent a sleepless night. By the morning the fever had subsided but the child did not appear to be normal. By the afternoon he again had high fever. The doctor changed the medicines. The fever was on and off. The boy was dehydrated. Rajyalakshmi suggested some native medicine and left for Machilipatnam along with her children.

The mysterious fever had left a telling mark on the boy. The boy's legs became emaciated and appeared to be deformed. They consulted a pediatrician. He thoroughly examined the boy for a length of time and declared that he had an attack of polio. Unfortunately no effective treatment was available for polio in Madras. He gave him some medicines for temporary relief. Kusuma sank into the corner of the room. She was overpowered by grief.

Different medicines were administered. Ayurvedic and Homeopathic doctors were also consulted. As part of naturopathic treatment tub-baths were given for several days. His legs were massaged with cow's ghee and herb juices. Every possible medical advice was implemented and everyone seemed to give a new hope. Several nostrums followed and amulets were tied. Kusuma prayed and fasted for several successive days. All ministrations come to naught.

Kusuma was propelled into despair and lost her spirit. U.G. maintained an unruffled air. If he had any grief, it was lost in his fiery calm. He advised his wife to be calm and accept the situation. Dr. Seshagiri Rao visited several times and comforted his sister.

Upon enquiring, U.G. came to know that there was a famous polio specialist by name Dr. Keni in Bombay. Explaining all the details about the present condition of his son,

U.G. wrote a letter to his friend L.V. Bhave. After a week he received a reply from him. U.G. and Kusuma proceeded to Bombay along with their son.

There, they stayed in Arya Vihar Hotel. U.G. met Bhave and they all went to see the doctor. They had to stay in Bombay for a week for the necessary tests to be completed.

Dr. Keni said, 'Mr. U.G, I have thoroughly examined all the test results and x-rays. I have discussed this case with my colleagues as well. In fact, we've had many such cases. All the cells in the legs are dead and the tissues are badly damaged. Unfortunately, our medical technology is inadequate to cure him permanently. However, we can provide temporary relief with our treatment. The correct treatment for polio can only be found in America.' He wrote a lengthy prescription and handed it over to U.G.

The tiny tot Vasant was huddled in Kusuma's lap like a curved rubber doll. Looking into Kusuma's face Dr. Keni advised, 'You must take every care not to hurt his tender feelings. He should not feel that he is helpless or disabled. He needs love, not sympathy, and support, not pity. As all you know pity is poisonous. Good luck.' U.G. and his family returned to Madras.

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Kusuma was shaken to the roots of her being. The shadow of fate had blotted out all her bliss as a mother. A great surge of pity engulfed her. She galloped to the cradle, lifted the boy and hugged him. As she melted away in deep love, she kept whispering all sorts of endearing names into Vasant's ears. Now he became her only serious business in life.

Durgamma arrived from Gudiwada and Narasimha Rao from Machilipatnam. Other close relatives also visited. Durgamma suggested to Kusuma to visit Lord Venkateswara, the presiding deity at Tirupati. In fact, Kusuma had already been thinking of it.

Throughout this tragedy in his life U.G. kept a cool head and a poised bearing. He was not indifferent or impassive but he was never over-anxious. As a pragmatic man he took everything in his stride.

One day, he addressed his wife who was visiting with their relatives, 'Kusuma, have courage. I promise you that I shall never let Vasant down or leave him to his fate. I am pledging that I shall put him on his legs and help him live normally. I am even prepared to sell away all our property to make him walk on his legs.'

Vasant could not get up or stand without someone's help. In the house he was rolling from place to place, sliding on his posterior. The scene was agonizing to his mother and sisters. Bharati and Usha looked after him, playing with him affectionately.

Now Kusuma turned her mind to God. She expressed her strong desire to visit Tirupati, the holy abode of Lord Venkateswara. She vowed to drop "golden legs" in the *Hundi*[72] as an offering to the Lord. U.G. had his own likes and dislikes on many things including religious beliefs. Nevertheless, he honored Kusuma's sentiments and agreed to take her to Tirupati. Kusuma was happy; she knew of U.G.'s dislike for such things.

U.G. hired a taxi to go to Tirupati. A relative accompanied them. They all stayed in a choultry. Although she knew his attitude toward such matters, Kusuma requested her husband to go with her into the temple. U.G. laughed mildly closing his eyes and exclaimed, 'Look, Kusuma, you know my views on this; but I respect others' sentiments and their individual faiths. Please go and have the God's *darshan*. Don't waste your time with me.' She left rather disappointed.

The temple area was filled with a spiritual aura and was abuzz with various devotional activities. Many tongues were heard. Kusuma stood in line waiting for her turn. To her, the smell of the temple with its flowers and joss sticks felt like heaven on earth. Her turn came after half an hour. At last she was face to face with the image of Lord Venkateswara. She thought, 'God's grace is the magic formula to condone the sins of one's past lives. She prayed devoutly closing her eyes and promised Him two "golden legs", symbolizing her son's two legs. She asked Vasant to pray by folding his little hands. He did, innocently.

Slowly they came out. All of a sudden hundreds of devotees raised their voices like a war cry, 'Govinda, Govinda, save us, save us!' She walked slowly towards the choultry. She purchased the famous *prasada*[73] of Lord Venkateswara, a *laddu*[74]. There was satisfaction and immense relief on her face. She was emboldened by her faith in God.

U.G. sat leisurely on the doorstep waiting for his wife's return. He recalled his first trip here as a toddler in 1921 with his grandparents.

Kusuma came to the room along with her companion and told U.G., 'I have developed a strong belief in course of time that the legs of Vasant would become normal.'

U.G. picked up his son and asked, 'Did you see God? Did you pray?' The child nodded his head, eating some of the *laddu*. Kusuma offered a piece of it to U.G. He ate it without hesitation as he would any sweet. They all traveled back to Madras.

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Kusuma seemed to be spending her days happily. She entrusted everything to God and waited for a miracle to happen, hoping that one day Vasant would walk, jump and run.

Time is a great healer. Yes, but like death it is also a great leveler. The Theosophical Society (T.S.) was undergoing a perceptible change in its functions. Most of its senior members were intoxicated by power and authority in an attempt to establish their hegemony. Ultimately the Society had become a quagmire of petty internal politics like any political party. Money and personal likes and dislikes shaped its destiny. Many unfortunate things had happened in rapid succession which caused a creeping disgust and dissatisfaction in U.G. He received a torrent of complaints against some senior members. As a watch dog, U.G. never spared anyone, however great he or his position might be. Instead of being spiritual seekers, some of them had become power-mongers. U.G termed the situation "petticoat politics".

He even attacked Krishnaji vehemently as no one had ever dared to before him. Day by day, U.G. became aggressive and acerbic. T.S. members were embarrassed by his frank frontal attacks. It was very distressing to Jinarajadasa. To mollify U.G. he wrote a letter:

> I have heard about your reactions with reference to the Theosophical Society and Krishnaji – how critical you have become of everything and everybody! I should like to know your exact viewpoint and would certainly like to discuss it with you. I suggest that you contribute a series of articles to the *Theosophist*. You can very freely criticize anybody – the President, the General Secretaries and anybody else, in support of your position. Such articles would be welcome in order to maintain absolute freedom on the platform of the Theosophical Society. It is only by such frank and free expression of opinions that organizations can retain their vigor and vitality. If you feel that the Theosophical Society should be closed down, say so in the articles. Let the members know it and let them begin to think. I feel that I at any rate will be greatly benefited.

The letter had no impact on U.G. whatsoever. At one crashing point U.G. decided to resign T.S. and its esoteric section. Stating this he wrote a letter to Jinarajadasa.

Jinarajadasa was taken aback. Why did U.G. make this hasty decision? How embarrassing it would be if he left the Society at this juncture? Who could fill the void? Whatever might be the ongoing internal politics, it would not be wise to ditch the institution. Jinarajadasa wrote to U.G., 'After I return from America both of us will sit together and discuss the issues thoroughly. Please maintain even keel and patience. I know you are ruled by the mind rather than by the heart.'

Jinarajadasa was touring Australia and New Zealand then, and he was about to leave for America. Respecting his sentiments U.G. did not resign but continued in Society activities. Its elections were held in February for the Presidency. Huge sums of money changed hands for the votes. Raja did not contest because he could not adjust to or assimilate the polluted internal politics of the Society. Neelakantha Sri Ram was elected President. U.G. did not relish his elevation as they two were at loggerheads for many years.

Jinarajadasa passed away on 18th June 1953 while he was in Chicago. With the death of Raja the older generation of the Theosophical Society had become extinct. Jinarajadasa dedicated his life for the development of the Society from 1901 to 1953. He served Mother Annie Besant as her own son. He served the Society as a President selflessly from 1946 to 1953. He acted like a bridge between the Theosophical Society and Krishnaji, and with his death the bridge had collapsed never to mend.

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U.G. had an interest in and taste for contemporary European literature. Apart from it, he was well-read in Telugu literature. One of the relatives of U.G., Machiraju Sambasiva Rao, was studying for B.A. in Madras. He visited U.G. occasionally during his holidays. He had a craze for English literature and the two of them had literary

discussions, chiefly about the dramas of Shakespeare. Literature reflecting surrealism in novels and plays was an important topic of discussion. Besides, T.S. Eliot, Auden, Stephen Spender, Virginia Woolf were also analyzed. The plays of Jean-Paul Sartre and the novel *The Fancy Dress Party* by the Italian novelist Alberto Moravia were part of the menu.

Many a youth would visit U.G. to receive his advice in their literary pursuits.

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The anniversary celebrations of the Theosophical Society were being organized in different parts of Europe. U.G. was specially invited to deliver lecturers. He went to London and took part in the celebrations there.

Later, U.G. visited the famous philosopher Bertrand Russell in London. Russell wrote several articles and gave discourses against the dangers of the atom bomb. He was a world-renowned philosopher, mathematician and also a harbinger of world peace. When he visited to Russell, a number of intellectuals were sitting around him. Russell held a pipe in his hand, smoking it now and then. At that time he was discussing the perils of the atom bomb.

'The atom bomb leads to the destruction of humanity. Human civilization and culture will be totally wiped out from the earth. So it's necessary to protect the human race from the danger by fighting against the atom bomb.'

U.G. took part in the discussion for a while. Then to everyone's surprise U.G. supported the idea of the atom bomb. There was a stunning silence. India was well known for its crusade of peace. U.G was the first Indian to support the atom bomb. He addressed Russell and posed a question, 'Sir, the atom bomb is merely an extension of the baton of the policeman. Could you survive without the help of the police? Just as the police machinery is needed to protect the law of the land, why don't we think that the bomb is necessary to protect a country? Can you afford the abolition of the police system?'

Russell looked at him in surprise. He lighted his pipe and replied, 'No, my dear young man, how is it possible? But a line of demarcation should be drawn somewhere between the two.'

'No sir, one is as necessary as the other. Why should there be a demarcation? The primitive man who lived in caves used a bone or a stone as a weapon for self-defense against wild animals. The atom bomb is part of the same line of thinking.' Russell was taken aback with the logic of U.G.

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In July 1953, U.G. arrived in Oslo, Norway. On the next day, he participated in the One World Movement organized in Oslo. Later, he went to Stockholm and addressed a gathering there. In Copenhagen he gave a lecture on the "Noble Aspirations and Ideals of Life in India". He gave a lecture in Hamburg, Germany and then proceeded to

Amsterdam. From Holland he went back to Rendsberg in Germany. As the chief guest in the German Summer School there, he gave a lecture on "Man, Nature and Reality".

> The history of Theosophical thought is the history of the evolution of modern thought. As of all other, the survey of Theosophical thought in successive periods of the Society's history is the general evolution and progress of human thought. The leaders of the Society have a place not only in the Theosophical Movement but also in the history of world thought itself, in the whole intellectual advance that has been registered these seventy-seven years. Every leader has contributed to this onward and forward movement some small fresh fragment to the Temple of Theosophical Wisdom. Progress always appears in different light to different people. The Society is not simply a working institution; it is a spiritual organization. It is different from the ordinary human societies or clubs that men form for ordinary purposes of human association; but it is still a Society composed of people of various nationalities, and therefore, not something that you can talk about in the abstract. It is like any other organization made up of members. Sometimes in the life of any spiritual movement, we just seem to be jogging along; nothing very much appears to be happening and we do not seem to be getting anywhere in particular; it is only when we pause to look back and to take our bearings that we realize what a long way we have, in fact, come from where we started and what tremendous advances we are really making. There is bound to be loss as well as gain but the leaders have during these seventy seven years made significant contributions in and through the Theosophical Society to the religious life of the community as a whole. Each of them had something new to say and that is why we revere them, but each of them in a different fashion proclaimed a different facet of Theosophy, and they carried the Society forward with them because they journeyed with their faces towards the light. They have left their mark upon its outlook and activities and have also helped to set the general tone and direction of the Society.
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> Let us very briefly see the different stages of growth and the gradual objectivization of the ideals of Theosophy. Let me very briefly survey the background of the Theosophical Movement and the conditions of the world before its advent.
>
> The world was then divided into two camps, that of rigid materialism and that of a narrow and bigoted form of religion. It was an age of conquering science when religion was on the defense. The increase of "valid knowledge" called Science was having a disturbing effect on the religious traditions. Religion had become bankrupt, for it had no real life in it. The mechanistic theory of man and the Universe grew in clarity and prestige. The philosophy that emanated was a materialistic philosophy which sought in matter the solution of all mysteries. Into this maelstrom of opposing and conflicting forces was heralded the Theosophical Society. Thus what was wanted, the Theosophical society supplied. So the work of H.P. Blavatsky is of great consequence, as she supplied a philosophy of life which was broad enough to include both spirit and matter. The great Theosophical treatise, *The Secret Doctrine*, by Madame Blavatsky,

brought together all sorts of facts in the domain of mysticism, religion, philosophy and science to prove that quite apart from science and religion, dogma and worship, there is one step beyond mind touching spirit, which may be called the transcendental aspect of Theosophy. She tried to establish the Law of Reincarnation, the Theory of Karma, the power of mind over matter and she stressed the practice which, in fact, is Occultism. It appealed to the intellectuals of that time and so she was able to gather around her great personages like Edison, Sir William Crookes, Alfred Russell Wallace, W.T. Stead and Sir Oliver Lodge, though they dropped out of our ranks later. Thus the early efforts of H.P.B. proved the supremacy of spirit over mind.

But when Dr. Annie Besant came to the scene she tried to contact that spirit and to make that Transcendental into Immanent. And her method of achieving this was the service of mankind. What is the motive for service? Each one of us has to try and delve as deeply as possible within himself to see what really is the propelling force or hidden motive behind his activities. This is how a modern psychologist, E.M. Delfield, warns us when he says:

'The philanthropist is relatively safe when he acknowledges safely to himself the elements of satisfaction in his work. The person who says, "I give freely and look for no return; I wear myself out for the sake of others; I accept honors and responsibility unwillingly; the money I receive for my work is nothing to me; I do not want gratitude," is being hoodwinked by his unconscious. People do not consider it decorous to realize that they are doing more interesting work and getting better pay than ever before, an outlet for their energies and many are the better for it.'

Why the urge for service at all? ... Dr. Besant taught us that life is only for service. She stressed the central truth as distinct from dogmatic and institutional forms. This appealed to the modern mind, which was becoming increasingly rationalistic in temper and outlook. She made the evolving Universe intelligible to millions of people and from the heights of her idealism she set in motion thought currents which spiritualized them more than any other single influence.

Leadbeater helped us to see the other worlds to which we also belong, the worlds invisible and intangible. Our citizenship is also in Heaven. The unseen world is only an expansion of that which is seen. There is one more contribution of his. At the time of the inauguration of the Theosophical Society the adepts did not use the phrases "The inner government of the world", "The Ideas of Manu, the Bodhisattva and the Logos". These were all later revelations. These were elaborated by the investigations of Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater from whom we also heard of the Monad, the Group Soul, etc.

But the cycle is not complete; if we want to complete this cycle we must be able to see the immanence as well as transcendence. It is really the summation, the integration, the climax of the group of thought-forms, the thought processes and evolution....

> And in the words of an American philosopher, adapted slightly, even the Truths of Theosophy may dust the mind by their dryness unless they are effaced each morning and rendered fertile by the dews of fresh and living truth. Otherwise, our love of Theosophy has no reality behind it. The vital principles and truths that operate in any spiritual movement are likely to become a dogma or creed when the movement settles down. Each one of us must discover his own mystery, what the *Light on the Path* calls "final secret". To do this is to discover something in terms of our own experience, a vital transforming experience. Until we have discovered that centre in ourselves, whatever may be the magnitude of our contribution, all that activity, all that contribution, is bound to be devoid of the unique and vitalizing factor, namely undivided inspiration. In the ultimate analysis, it is the individual that matters. Only to the extent that an individual that matters, only to the extent that an individual is inspired from within himself can he contribute to the common work and thus energize what we call group activity. This process of inwardness, if I may say so, is not morbid isolationism or an ivory tower outlook. Now we cannot go deep down into ourselves except in a state of relationship with others. To the extent that we are periodically able to go deep down into ourselves can we find that inspiration which is necessary....
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> It is said that the Maha-Chohan has given, as it were, a charter for the work of the Theosophical Society when he said: "The Theosophical Society was chosen as the cornerstone, the foundation, of the future religions of humanity." Shall we not see that day? The world needs Theosophy. The forces of the world are with us, the times and the spirit of the age are with us and I have no doubt the Truths of Theosophy which insist on a quest more than a creed would enable us to join the pursuit of the ideal, that is a thing which has still a future because they are of eternal value.

The entire talk was organized in a systematic way and U.G. presented it fluently. He spoke extemporaneously and received thundering applause from every corner of the audience. But U.G. he was quite indifferent to all the encomiums.

From Rendsberg, Germany, he went to Brussels, Belgium. There he got up on the dais to give his discourse. The audience was small: only 28 people attended the meeting. There were five hoary-headed women in the group. They wore Tennis shoes and listened to his talk while they knitted with needles. They attended the meeting just to pass time and had no special purpose or interest.

U.G. observed them and sarcastically smiled within himself:

> So, this is the great service I am rendering to the Theosophical Society and its propagation. Why should I find fault with these old women? In reality how many people have a dead earnest desire to understand what I say and react to my talk? Will the earthen brick turn into a looking mirror by grinding it again and again? Why I am serving the Theosophical Society in this fashion? None of the lectures and information I am transmitting is my own. They cannot be

> mine. I have gathered them from different sources like a bee. What's so great about repeating all that and reciting it? Anyone can convey it in a better manner than me. All this second-hand information is worthless. Is there any sense in wasting time and money like this? Can this roaming about and spending my energy be justified? Why am I wasting my life like this? What I am expecting and desiring? Is not all this an unnatural and meaningless labor? This is mere chattering and there is no wisdom in this way of life.

U.G. concluded his European tour with his last address to an audience consisting of merely 28 persons. For various reasons U.G. could not go to New York as planned.

While on his European tour, U.G. was constantly in touch with his family enquiring about Vasant's condition. In spite of his hectic schedule Vasant was in the back of his mind. How to make him walk on his own legs? Treatment in America was the only solution; but when?

After a few days, he started his journey back to India. He was happy to see his family members at the airport. Upon his arrival in Adyar many of his friends met him and enquired about his tour. He responded to them as if he had lost his enthusiasm. Some of his close associates smelled that U.G.'s days in the Theosophical Society were numbered.

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U.G. returned home very late that evening. After a bath and change of dress, he finished his supper and entered his study room upstairs. He picked up a book from the shelf and sat in a chair. He felt something soft like rubber in the chair and he got up to see what it was. A huge snake was in the chair curled on itself. He gazed at it with a total surprise: it was wheat-colored and glistening. As soon as he got up, the snake uncoiled itself slowly from the chair and left the room by the window. It was a frightful sight. Strangely, U.G. was not afraid of the snake; he remained calm. How could such a big snake enter his room? He considered it a freak incident and did not go downstairs. He just closed the window as a precautionary measure and started to read his book normally, sitting in the same chair.

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Durgamma sent a message to U.G. saying that she wanted to see him. U.G. immediately went to Gudiwada. There he came to know that Durgamma's sight was deteriorating. On her request he took her to Dr. Vempati Satyanarayana in Tenali. The doctor said that she had cataracts in her eyes. He gave some eye drops. And if the eyes showed no improvement, she should have her eyes operated, he said. Durgamma shuddered at the prospect of surgery.

'For the present, you use the medicine prescribed by the doctor; if there is improvement it's fine; if not, I'll get your eyes operated in Madras. There is no need to fear the operation; it's only a minor one,' assured U.G.

Durgamma was pleased with his words. 'One more thing: shortly I am going to Australia. As soon as I return, I will consult a doctor. Till then you can stay with Kusuma in Adyar,' said U.G.

She agreed. 'For your help Ramudu, I will be born to you again after my death,' she said with gratitude. His face broke into a smile: 'No, no, don't do that. I am already heavily loaded. Why an additional bond again?' Durgamma also smiled at his joke.

Next day, U.G. returned to Madras along with Durgamma. Kusuma and children were very happy about her staying there. Durgamma was anxious about Vasant's condition. She spent all her time with him telling him stories. Vasant became attached to her.

The medicines did not help. U.G. was advised U.G. to consult Dr. Cherian, a famous eye-surgeon. U.G. met him and got an appointment for surgery.

As planned, U.G. went to Australia. He toured the country giving lectures in different places. While he was in Melbourne he remembered that the operation date of his grandmother was fast approaching. He had yet to visit a number of cities. But he cut short his tour and returned to Madras. It was U.G.'s last tour on behalf of the Theosophical Society.

On seeing U.G. Durgamma was relieved and felt confident as her grandson would be by her side and see her through the surgery. Narasimha Rao came from Machilipatnam. He promised to Durgamma, 'I will stay here till your vision is restored.'

That evening U.G. met Dr. Cherian: 'The old woman cannot come to the hospital. Will you please operate at our residence instead?' For some strange reason, Dr. Cherian agreed.

On the appointed day, the doctor came to their residence with a nurse and operated on the Durgamma's eyes. Because of his liking for U.G. and respect for Durgamma the doctor charged a mere five hundred Rupees for the surgery. U.G. attended on Durgamma patiently, with all attention, like a nurse. His ministrations touched the chord of Durgamma's heart.

Durgamma desired to spend her last days in U.G.'s company. She knew beyond doubt that he would reject the idea of living in Gudiwada with his family. She broached the topic with Kusuma with a remote hope, 'I don't know whether you'll like the idea, but will you all live with me in Gudiwada? Is there tiny chance of it? Ramudu can continue his activities and work as he likes. But at the end of my life I wish to close my eyes once for all in presence of all of you. It is my cherished dream.' She hoped against hope that a word of Kusuma may have some weight with U.G.

Kusuma sympathized with the helpless way in which the old woman appealed to her in the last phase of her life: 'Oh my God, oh my poor grandmother, it's foolish to nurture such ideas. Your grandson won't care for anybody's word in such crucial matters. I understand your feelings. But it's impossible for me to influence him.'

'Yes, I knew very well. I nurtured a false hope. Let it be. I am a poor woman of ill luck.'

Later, Kusuma indirectly hinted to U.G., 'Our granny has a cherished ambition to live with all of us. She has been longing to spend her last days in your presence, I understand.'

'Who prevented her? By all means she can stay and spend her time here happily. It's a help to you too. But will she leave her house in Gudiwada and stay here? I doubt it.'

The following day after supper, U.G. all of sudden enquired affectionately, 'Well, Grandma, how long will you stay in Gudiwada all alone? Why don't you came and stay here with all of us? Children have already gotten used to you; especially Vasant has a great liking for you.' When the subject was moved unexpectedly, Durgamma was a bit surprised. She felt a thrill for a moment over the invitation from U.G.

She laughed mildly and said, 'How can I spend my time among these Tamilians? I don't know their language. I'll remain in Gudiwada.'

Narasimha Rao interjected by saying, 'Grandma will never leave that house in Gudiwada even if she's given a heap of gold. For her, it's heaven on earth.'

After some time Narasimha Rao left for Gudiwada along with Durgamma. He dropped her off there and went to Machilipatnam.

Several people gathered at her house to enquire about her welfare and the eye operation. They all simply adore her and they need her advice, her helping hand and many other things. They cared for her and she cared for them. That was as simple as that.

31. Locking of Horns

The curtain was about to rise for a different phase in U.G.'s life.

On 24th October 1953 Krishnaji arrived in Bombay from America. There he gave a series of talks for a few days and proceeded to Bangalore by train. From Bangalore he went by car to the Rishi Valley School, his dream project, near Madanapalli, and spent a few days there. Later, he arrived in Madras and stayed in Vasant Vihar. He continued his talks in Madras as usual.

U.G. attended the public meeting on 13th December. There U.G. met his old friend L.V. Bhave who happened to be a close associate of Krishnaji. Bhave accompanied Krishnaji and made the necessary arrangements for his meetings. He knew the intellectual caliber of U.G. and held him in high regard.

Krishnaji would only answer written questions submitted earlier. U.G. had been attending the meetings of Krishnaji but did not send him any questions because those that were sent and the answers given to them by Krishnaji were not impressive and had made no impact on U.G. The questions were too basic. They were not provocative questions such as: 'From what state of mind does Krishnaji address the audience?' 'What is the nature of that state?' 'What transformative process has occurred in him?' 'How did it dawn on him?' Nor did they probe the essence. This had been going on for years.

This time U.G. wanted to send a question to Krishnaji. He was, however, not interested in stock phrases like "love", "freedom", and "permanent happiness", which Krishnaji repeatedly used. What then should he ask? He thought for a while and suddenly an idea flashed in his mind. He wrote it on a piece of paper in the presence of Bhave and sent it to Krishnaji.

After his speech Krishnaji read U.G.'s question: 'Sir, what kick exactly do you get out of these talks and discussions? Obviously, you would not go on more than 20 years if you did not enjoy them or is it only by force of habit?'

The question was sharp and pointed like an arrow. It was not related to the topic of Krishnaji's discourse. Yet, it was not a frivolous question. Probably no one had ventured to ask such a pertinent question so far.

After reading out the question Krishnaji kept quiet for a few moments and replied:

> This is a natural question to put, is it not? Because, the questioner only knows or is aware that generally a speaker gets some kind of personal benefit out of it. Or is it merely old age? Or, whether one is young or old, is it the habit? That is all he is accustomed to; so he puts the question.

> What is the truth of this? Am I speaking out of habit? What do you mean by habit, force of habit? Because I have talked for twenty years, am I going to talk for twenty more years till I die? Is the understanding of anything habitual? The use of the words is habitual; but the contents of the words vary according to the perception of truth from moment to moment. If a speaker gets a kick out of it, then he is exploiting you. That is what most of us are used to. The speaker is then using you as a means of fulfillment and surely it would destroy that which is real. As we are concerned to find the truth and what is from moment to moment, in it there can be no continuity; all habit, all certainty, all desire for fulfillment, all personal aggrandizement must have come to an end, must it not? Otherwise, it is another way of exploiting, another way of deluding people; and with that surely we are not concerned.[75]

The next day Krishnaji spoke about death in the public meeting. He expressed his views on death on the following lines.

Out of all fears, the fear of death haunts man more than anything else. In order to conquer it man should discard the desire for permanency. As long as there is a longing for permanency, man strives for his safety and security. He cannot tolerate anything which will annihilate his existence. But knowing the impermanent nature of things, why should he be attached? A person who realizes this, he can live freely and fearlessly. Only in such a life there is real happiness. Life is the known. Death is the unknown. "Death" is a mere word. Because of his attachment to permanence, and in order to preserve himself and continue his existence, man has created a number of faiths and beliefs. He regards life and death as separate. Therefore the gap between life and death is creating a tremendous fear in man. Man should be constantly aware of this fear and overcome it. Choiceless awareness is to be cultivated.

Later on, there was a discussion about the experience of death. Participants expressed their different views on the subject. The discussion did not lead to any conclusion. There was some uncertainty. Suddenly Krishnaji pointed to U.G. in the audience and asked, 'What's your opinion in this matter, Sir?' Was Krishnaji casually picking U.G. out of the many people in the audience or did he identify him as the person who had sent that question on the previous day?

Some other person, who thought that it was him that Krishnaji was asking the question, got up to answer. Immediately Krishnaji exclaimed, 'No Sir, not you. I am asking the gentleman behind you,' pointing to U.G.

Till that moment U.G. was keenly following the discussion. Now he stood up to answer and all others kept silent. Heated arguments went on. Krishnaji contradicted U.G.'s standpoint. U.G. too opposed the views of Krishnaji. There were arguments and counterarguments. Like a hungry lion U.G. ferociously and logically tore Krishnaji's points to shreds. In a gentle manner Krishnaji presented his opinions skillfully. U.G., consumed by his passion for logic, made the issue more complicated with his cross questions. After some time there was a sudden silence in the hall for a few moments.

Noticing the lull as an opportunity for them to speak, someone else tried to express his point of view. But Krishnaji, who had been silent till then said, 'No Sir, we have to thrash this whole thing out between ourselves.'

Later the arguments continued and there was a deadlock. Again the hall fell into profound silence. The audiences were wonder-struck. The discussion was stopped for that day.

Next day, after his usual talk, Krishnaji renewed his discussion with U.G. Once again, they were locked in a logical battle. Still the discussion did not come to any conclusion. The arguments and counterarguments continued for more than twenty days.

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On that day, Krishnaji continued his discourse on death. The audience was attentively listening to him. U.G. too was casually listening to him sitting in the front row.

Suddenly there were some jerking movements in him. They gradually spread all over his body. He felt as if the vital force in him was being sucked out. Blood seemed to evaporate in the body. All the cells in the body were being squeezed out and the nerves were shrinking. The pulse beat became feeble. His palate was getting dry. Then he felt that his eyes were closing themselves. His breath slowed down. He thought for a moment that he was being hurled into an abyss.

U.G. tried to control himself in every possible manner. The struggle for survival was on. The body was determined to preserve itself. Its hold was lost and the struggled seemed hopeless. He shook with an inexplicable fear. What was happening to him? Was his life coming to end? For a moment he felt asphyxiated.

U.G. gathered all his strength and energy and suddenly jumped up. He stretched himself. After standing for a few seconds gradually he began to feel normal and he smacked his lips. He felt like a dragonfly which had been released from a closed fist. But there was still fear lingering in the body. Just before death, every living being feels such a natural fear. Gradually all the organs returned to their normal functioning. His energies were restored.

Meanwhile, Krishnaji was watching U.G. while, at the same time, he continued his talk without interruption. After sometime, he concluded his speech.

Perhaps Krishnaji wondered what had been happening to U.G. but he did not enquire. After the talk he just left the dais. One or two persons observed U.G. standing up with a trembling body, but no one asked him about his condition. He was left alone in the hall. Tremendous silence pervaded the place. A cool evening breeze swirled and there was total peace.

U.G. started thinking: What was this death-like experience? Why did he have it? What was the mystery behind it? Whatever it might be, he wanted to discuss the matter with Krishnaji and went to his room. On seeing U.G. he welcomed him with an impeccable smile.

U.G. explained the experience of death that he had had. Krishnaji listened to his description attentively. After a pause, Krishnaji looked at U.G. and asked, 'In having this experience do you have any role knowingly or unknowingly? Because man continuously thinks and imagines he has some spiritual experiences. Self-induced experiences are many.'

U.G. replied emphatically, 'No, no, never, Krishnaji. I never thought of such experiences. It was not in the realm of my thought. I cannot comprehend why I faced such a dreadful experience. I can assure you it was beyond the limits of my thinking structure.'

Krishnaji carefully observed U.G.'s words and kept silent for a few moments. Then he commented, 'If it is an involuntary experience without any choice on your part, its ultimate effect cannot be decided now. We have to wait and watch closely. But no experience of any kind is permanent. All experiences are fleeting and ephemeral; they will fade out in time. If the experience is genuine and real, it will operate in its own way; if it is not, it will fade away.'

'Well, Krishnaji, in fact, I have little faith in these experiences. I may venture to say, I have had several spiritual experiences before. I brushed them all aside, however profound they might or might not have seemed to be. To be frank, I never attributed any importance to them. I didn't care a tinker's damn about them. As you rightly pointed out, if it is real and meaningful, its ultimate results should be awaited. Sorry, Krishnaji, I wasted much of your time in narrating all this. I am highly thankful to you for your patient hearing,' said U.G.

'No, No, U.G., you did not waste my time,' replied Krishnaji.

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This death experience occurred when U.G. was 35 years of age. Every seven years he had been undergoing an unavoidable mutation for unknown reasons. This was the beginning of the sixth septennial cycle.

After two days, U.G. met Krishnaji again. Surprisingly, Krishnaji broached the subject of the experience of death.

'Well, U.G., what is meant by experience? Knowingly or unknowingly the mind undergoes a number of experiences. But without any volition or prop an experience cannot be had by itself. What's your view in the matter?' he questioned.

U.G. wondered why Krishnaji had given so much credence to his death experience. He replied, 'Well, Krishnaji, my basic question is, what is mind? What are its in and outs? Where is the mind located in man? Where is the seat of the sensorium? Without knowing answers to such questions, how can we come to a conclusion about the experiences generated knowingly or unknowingly? My fundamental point is why should only spiritually-inclined people have these experiences? Why does not anyone on the roadside have them? I mean to say that these experiences are conditioned. That is the

main reason why I always questioned every experience which does not stand to logic, however great and profound it might look.'

'Well said, U.G., all experiences are embedded on a surface crust. It is difficult to delve into the true origin and significance of these experiences,' replied Krishnaji.

U.G pondered a while and continued in a thoughtful mood, 'the mind is infinite and it opens before man many visions and vistas. Is there any spiritual reality behind these things? I am questioning the validity of spiritual or supra physical experiences, whatever they may be.'

The discussions continued for three days. U.G. was contradicting Krishnaji's views. They could not arrive at a common understanding.

'What is mind? Where is it located? What is the Truth that you have stumbled on in this matter, please tell me?' U.G. queried. He asked the same question several times and Krishnaji was totally silent, as if silence was the ultimate Truth. Krishnaji evasively changed the topic. U.G. was surprised that Krishnaji seemed to give importance to the experience of death for some unknown reason. He too might have had a similar mystical or spiritual experience somewhere along the line.

Krishnaji's experiences, if any, were not revealed to anybody. They were not mentioned anywhere in his books or talks. Why? Why did he not come out clean? Why was he hiding them, for what purpose? Maybe Krishnaji did not have a similar experience of death; maybe his experience was of a different dimension.

One day, Krishnaji gave a lengthy talk on the subconscious and unconscious. U.G. thought it was boring. U.G. questioned, 'Krishnaji, "unconscious", "subconscious" and other such words should be snuffed out. They are only for professors of philosophy. I have asked you before and I am asking you again, basically, is there any mind? If there is, what are its characteristics? Where is the sensorium located in man? I delved deeply and swam all the shores but I could not locate the mind in me. Is there any mind at all which can be known by experience? First, clarify this point. Then we can discuss the unconscious and the subconscious.'

Krishnaji kept silent as usual and after a pause he remarked slowly, 'For you and me, Sir, there is no unconscious or subconscious. But for them there is,' pointing to the audience.

U.G. was taken aback by this reply. Why this dichotomy of public and private? Knowing very well that there is no mind, what was the propriety in making others believe there is a mind? However, U.G. appreciated Krishnaji's honesty.

The discussions between the teacher and the disciple continued on without coming to an agreement on any topic. From the start, L.A. Bhave observed closely the tie between Krishnaji and U.G. He was all praise for U.G.'s daring and his uncompromising attitude. He wanted to arrange a private meeting between them and he mentioned the idea to U.G.

U.G. agreed, 'Well, all right, but be clear about one thing: I don't have any personal problems. Even if there are, I will sort them out myself. I don't depend on anyone's help.' Later Bhave proposed such a meeting and Krishnaji readily agreed to meet U.G. separately.

One early morning, Krishnaji was expecting U.G in his room. The previous night there was much dew. The leaves of trees glittered in the golden rays of the morning rising sun. In the sunlight the dew drops appeared like pearls. The sun's rays shone on the walls of Vasant Vihar and made them appear like a golden painting. The window panes glistened. The sky was clear and the birds on the trees in the yard were fluttering and making different noises. Near Krishnaji's room flowering plants were emanating fragrance and the fallen petals of the flowers on the ground added to the beauty of the surroundings.

U.G. got down from the taxi and entered the compound of Vasanta Vihar. The weather was cool; a wind flew fast by him. U.G. entered Krishnaji's room, leaving his shoes outside. A total silence permeated the room. U.G. folded his hands and greeted Krishnaji by saying "*Namaskaram*". Krishnaji returned the greeting. 'Please sit down, U.G.' he said, glancing at U.G. with a look of ineffable tenderness and love. He was dressed in perfect white and looked like a lily. His hair was parted in the middle down to his ears. U.G. sat comfortably in a chair and cast a glance around the room. The slanted morning sun rays were shining through the windows. From afar came a heavy odor of soil sodden from the previous night's drizzle.

They sat quietly for a while. Breaking the blissful silence U.G. said politely, 'Krishnaji, let me introduce myself as a fervidly frank and open man. I don't have any personal problems. I have not come here for any clarification or analysis of any topic on which we have been arguing for a number of days.' He stopped a while and continued, 'For many years I have followed your talks avidly whenever possible. Before that, I read most of your books voraciously and several doubts cropped up in me. In fact, I was even criticizing you sharply. Many of your admirers misunderstood me. They thought that I was doing it because I had been instigated by others, which is utterly false. I have my own ways of independent thinking and perceiving in spiritual matters. But let me tell you very clearly, I have not come to you to get my doubts cleared.'

Krishnaji was silent, calmly listening to him and studying his expressions and gestures. They were silent for a few moments and U.G. continued, 'We belong to Gudiwada near Bezawada. In 1925, I saw you in Bezawada when I was still a child at Rajagopalachari's house along with my grandfather. My grandfather, Tummalapalli Gopala Krishna Murty, was a renowned Theosophist. He had close contacts with Colonel Alcott, Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant. He donated lakhs of rupees for the development of the Theosophical Society. He also liberally donated to the World University and Rishi Valley School.'

He stopped abruptly and continued, 'For many years I have been a member of the Theosophical Society and have been working for it. I had intimate contacts with the

late George Arundale and Jinarajadasa. For the last six or seven years I have toured in India and Europe as a National Speaker. Recently I finished my tour in Australia.'

A gentle wind blew across the room from the windows; it was laden with a distant perfume of the flowers in the garden. Two sparrows flew in from outside, sat on a window sill, chirped for a while and flew away.

Krishnaji and U.G. lapsed into silence. Breaking the silence, Krishnaji spoke softly, 'Well, U.G., I have learned about your tour in Europe, particularly, when I was in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, etc. There is a strange coincidence in our names. A number of people wrote letters to me. They were confused. So I wrote back to them saying, "I am not that Krishnamurti whom you are inviting. He is a different person".'

There was silence again for a few moments. Krishnaji enquired affectionately, 'It gives me great pleasure to meet you separately like this. Well, U.G., what's your present program? Are you going abroad again?'

U.G. was delighted with Krishnaji's display of affection and said, 'I am highly grateful for your gracious good will. I thank you, Sir! I am honored to come to pay a visit to you. Besides the hectic work of the Theosophical Society, I have also family responsibilities,' said U.G.

Krishnaji was little surprised; he lifted his head and gazed at him with wide open eyes, expressing inquisitiveness, 'Are you married? Indeed! Nice to know.'

'Yes, Krishnaji, I am married and am a father of three children.'

Krishnaji was even more pleased and cheerful learning that U.G. was a married man. Later, the conversation became desultory. It was interrupted by the sound of footsteps from outside the room. A servant brought two glasses of fruit juice. Krishnaji nodded his head at U.G. and they both drank the juice.

Krishnaji held U.G.'s hand tenderly and said, 'Well, U.G., at our convenience we shall meet again and discuss things. I thank you for your visit.'

* * * *

In the evening, when he saw Bhave, Krishnaji, for some mysterious reason, said, 'Please ask U.G. to meet me again tomorrow.' Bhave nodded happily. He was not surprised at this strange development.

The next day, U.G. promptly appeared on the scene. They both chatted in a friendly manner at length. Krishnaji was in a more cheerful and jovial mood. He enquired about the details of U.G.'s family. All of sudden Krishnaji announced, 'U.G., tomorrow bring your wife and children with you. Will you?'

U.G. nodded affirmatively to his utter astonishment. Krishnaji gives talks on Sunday evenings and he would not normally have visitors on those mornings. But as he had no other time available, he had to make an exception for U.G.

On learning of Krishnaji's invitation Kusuma was thrilled. She heard about him through her husband and through other Theosophical circles but did not know much about him. Her landlord Kamat was a great admirer of Krishnaji. Once he told her that he was none other than a divine incarnation and that it was a rare treat to be with him.

Early Sunday morning, U.G. went to Vasant Vihar in a taxi along with his wife and daughters Bharati and Usha. Their son Vasant was left at home with the maid servant Lakshmi.

It was a beautiful morning with a crystal clear sky. The mansion was glistening in the sunshine which flooded the surrounding garden with a golden radiance. The birds on the trees were chirping and jostling. A monkey family settled on the tree. One monkey sat on a branch leisurely and kept busy removing lice from the head of another monkey. A few birds landed on the ground from the sky to pick grains. Several dragon flies were tracing geometric figures in the air. At the bottom of an old tree trunk ants moved in rows, touching each other's heads to exchange passwords and went on their busy schedule. Two squirrels darted from branch to branch lifting their bushy tails. A lone spider sprung from a tuft of leaves and started to weave a web to attract moths. Somewhere there was a faint hum of birds.

U.G.'s family entered the hall and removed their shoes. As Krishnaji was expecting them, he came out of his room, walked a few steps towards them and welcomed them with ease and exquisite politeness. They all paid their respects and sat on their respective seats.

Krishnaji appeared a picture of radiant simplicity. A jasmine-white dress adorned his slim and erect body. He was as delicate as a petal, as fresh as morning dew and as graceful as an angelic figure.

U.G. introduced his family to Krishnaji. Looking at the children he enquired, 'Are they twins?' U.G. said 'No, Sir.'

Krishnaji asked their names. They gave their names without hesitation. The second daughter of U.G., Usha, attracted Krishnaji's attention more. She was charming, of a golden-yellow complexion, with curly hair, and clam-shell-like glittering eyes, smart nose, red lips and rosy cheeks. Usha was moving around freely like a tiny bird. Bharati was also attractive and adorable. She was sitting quietly near her mother and now and then telling her sister not to gambol.

Krishnaji's eyes quickly observed the epitome of feminine beauty of Kusuma. She wore a peacock-blue-colored sari and jewelry around her neck. Flowers were perched on her long and black braid. She wore lampblack salve on the edges of her eyelids. Between the eyebrows there was a striking vermilion mark. She appeared dignified and graceful, a

perfect example of a Telugu housewife from an aristocratic family. Everything was in perfect harmony in her figure.

The children went out to play under a tree. Hearing their footsteps some birds flew away, but the monkeys were not disturbed by their presence. During their casual conversation Krishnaji came to know that Kusuma had appeared for B.A. privately; he was also delighted to learn that she could sing well. He always had a soft corner for women and he encouraged their creative activities. He believed that women should not be confined to kitchen and childbearing. He once bitterly criticized, 'India is a land of spiritual lore; yet they cruelly ill-treat their women folk. What type of spiritualism is this?'

Kusuma was enthralled by Krishnaji's captivating smile. Krishnaji maintained an opaque silence. That silence was blissful and his proximity emitted a mysterious peace. His mien was soothing. Kusuma lent herself to its influence, tasting a joy she had never experienced before. For her, he was a spiritually-exalted person who had a divine source. A profound, utterly ageless, spiritual virtue crystallized in his personality. He was a veritable perfection with a finely-chiseled body that was aesthetically delightful to watch. Kumari instantly felt respect and reverence for him.

Suddenly, Usha dashed into the room like a dragon fly. Krishnaji signed to her to come to him. She rushed to him. He held her by his hand and took her to his bed room. On the table there were almonds in a plate. He placed the dish before Usha. The surprised Usha began to pick some of them and eat them. She thrust some into her pockets. Both her hands were full of almonds and none remained on the plate.

Krishnaji watched attentively Usha's childish prank and they two came out of the room. Meanwhile, Bharati stepped in. She looked at the almonds and asked Usha, 'Will you give me a few?' Usha shook her head and said, 'No, *Taatayya*[76] gave them all to me. Why should I give? I won't.' So saying, she ran out into the yard with all the almonds.

Krishnaji said with a beaming smile, 'Look at her, she is eating them eagerly like an old woman, as if she might not see them again, and she grabbed the remaining almonds for herself.'

Bharati was unhappy. She went to Krishnaji and demanded holding his chin, '*Taatayya*, give me some almonds too. Why did you give her all the almonds? And you didn't give me any, why?'

'I do not have any more almonds, Bharati, your sister has taken all of them,' he tried to pacify her: 'I will give you some tomorrow.'

But Bharati insisted, 'No, I want them right now. She is eating them all without giving me a single piece.'

'I will give you grapes, instead,' Krishnaji offered. But Bharati refused. U.G. was silently observing the children. Kusuma intervened and pacified Bharati. In a dejected mood Bharati calmed down grumbling.

Later, Krishnaji went in, brought some grapes and gave them to Bharati. She was somewhat pacified on seeing them. From a distance, Usha watched Bharati eating something and rushed to her. 'What are you eating, show me?' she demanded. 'This is a new sweet, very tasteful.' Usha stretched her hand and asked for some of the grapes. 'Oh, no, a little while ago you didn't give me almonds. Why should I give these now to you? I won't,' she retorted.

Usha thought a little and came forward with a proposal: 'I will give you almonds in exchange for some grapes, O.K.?' After some hesitation Bharati said, 'But, you must give me two almonds for each grape, will you agree?' 'Yes, take four almonds and give me two grapes,' said Usha. Everyone in the room watched the scene and smiled. Krishnaji said, 'Wonderful deal!'

It was time for Krishnaji's lunch. U.G. looked at his wife and signed to her. Kusuma got up followed by U.G. 'Well, Krishnaji, I am highly grateful for finding time for my family. May we take leave of you,' said U.G.

'*Annayya*,[77] it is a memorable day in my life. I don't know how to express my inner feelings,' exclaimed Kusuma.

Krishnaji too got up and beckoned the two children. They came to him. He smoothly touched their heads and bid goodbye to Kusuma, 'All right, *Amma*[78], let's hope to meet again shortly. Thanks for your visit.' He walked them to the door.

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32. Helping Vasant Stand on His Legs

One evening, Krishnaji was walking alone towards Edward Elliot Beach. The beach was full of activity. The sea was roaring incessantly. The sun was setting slowly folding its golden wings. Two urchins were chasing crabs popping out of holes. A few catamarans were dancing up and down in the waves. Yonder, the sea and sky joined in a luminous haze. Children were picking pebbles and shells. Crabs disappeared into their holes. The wind was blowing heavily. Calling loudly, some boys were selling eatables. One boy came to Krishnaji and offered to sell sweetmeats. Krishnaji smiled and turned them down politely.

Unexpectedly, Krishnaji met Kusuma, Bharati and Usha. The servant girl Lakshmi was carrying Vasant on her shoulder. She appeared to be carrying a heavy load. Krishnaji gazed at Lakshmi for a few moments with a sympathetic look. He had a thump in his heart as if he was carrying the load. He was saddened to see a young lass of less than ten years age carrying a boy heavier than herself.

Kusuma was surprised to see Krishnaji. She greeted him with folded hands. They talked for a few minutes, bowed to each another and went their ways.

The next day, when U.G. met Krishnaji he echoed, 'Well, U.G., last evening I saw your family. It was painful to watch a little girl carrying a boy...'

Before Krishnaji concluded his comment, U.G. interjected and said, 'Krishnaji, he is my son and he is crippled. He lost control of both his legs because of polio. He cannot walk by himself, especially on the sandy beach. So, the girl was carrying him. He likes to go to the beach,' U.G. explained in an emotional manner.

Krishnaji was shocked. 'O my God, how awful! What a misfortune has befallen your family,' Krishnaji sympathized.

U.G. continued with a grim face: 'I consulted all the local doctors. I had been to Bombay to consult a top pediatrician. I was told that there is no proper cure available in India. I have decided to take the boy to America for treatment. It seems that there they provide braces which could be useful in bringing his legs under control. I know it's an expensive affair.'

'Medical treatment in America is expensive beyond imagination. Anyway, this is utterly shocking,' Krishnaji declared consoling.

'I can't leave the boy to his fate. I must take him to America at any cost. We've already decided on this matter. Now I'm gathering the relevant information with the help of my brother–in–law who is a doctor here. Someone has informed us that the Roosevelt Foundation Hospital in Georgetown would be the place to go to; and another source mentioned a hospital in Chicago. Whatever it costs, I'll try to make him stand on his own legs. The rest doesn't matter,' concluded U.G. firmly.

Krishnaji sighed heavily and remained silent.

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Another Sunday morning, U.G. visited Krishnaji along with his family. The morning was fresh. The sky was clear and there was a cool breeze. In the clear blue skies a row of birds was flying in search of food. Over the flowerbed a few butterflies hovered.

U.G.'s family slowly threaded their way into Krishnaji's room. R. Madhavachari, a close friend of Krishnaji, was also present. After the usual greetings, they all got busy with conversation, except for Kusuma who kept quiet, watching Krishnaji keenly. Bharati and Usha were playing outside, freely picking fallen flowers and twigs under the tree. After half an hour, they got tired and returned to Krishnaji and sat silently. Though they could not understand the adults' conversation, they listened attentively.

A big wind brought in fragrance from flowers like a soothing benediction. While talking with others, Krishnaji scanned the surroundings and the movements of everyone minutely.

Krishnaji turned to Madhavachari and said '*Mama*[79], in our busy conversation we have completely neglected the children. Could you please bring some fruit for them?' Madhavachari went and brought two oranges and gave one to each of the children.

The children quickly peeled them and threw the peels and seeds on the floor helter-skelter. Krishnaji who was always keen on being tidy, got up from his seat, gave them an old newspaper and asked them to collect the skins and seeds on it. They did his bidding. He then asked them to drop the paper in the dustbin outside the room. They obeyed and put the paper in the basket, then went out to play once again. Kusuma was pleased to see Krishnaji personally teaching her children tidiness.

U.G.'s reaction was different. He smiled at Krishnaji and exclaimed, 'Your preaching will not last with the children. If you don't believe my words, you try again Krishnaji. They will do the same thing again.'

Krishnaji smiled. 'All right, we'll see.' He turned to Madhavachari and asked, '*Mama*, please bring two more oranges and give them.'

Madhavachari brought two big oranges and called in the children who were playing hide and seek. They came running and Krishnaji gave them the fruit again. Unconsciously, the children peeled the fruits quickly and threw the skins on the floor exactly as they did before. They ate the orange pieces and ran outside to play. Evidently they did not remember to follow the instructions Krishnaji had given them before. Kusuma felt unhappy over her children's behavior.

Krishnaji was silent. After a few moments U.G. went on, 'This is their inborn nature. They appear to listen to us, but when it's time to act, they do as they please. I'm sorry to say that persons who don't have the experience of bringing up children can't know their mentality. Somehow, I don't have faith in such attempts to educate children. They

learn things in their own way and nothing should be thrust on them. That's my view,' he concluded politely.

There was a reason for U.G.'s lengthy remarks in this context: Krishnaji had written a book called *Education and the Significance of Life*. The book was going to be published shortly. Though it was written many years ago, no publisher came forward to publish it. After a temporary oblivion for a few years, it was finally going to see the light of day. It contained more ideals than realities.

Krishnaji listened to what all U.G. had said about bringing up children and kept quiet. There was no change in his demeanor. Like a *Sthita Prajna*,[80] he remained unmoved whether people bitterly criticized him or praised him to the sky. Patience was a hallmark of Krishnaji's personality.

Kusuma did not relish the way in which her husband had criticized Krishnaji indirectly. Madhavachari took leave of them announcing that a person was waiting at that hour for his appointment with Krishnaji and left the room hurriedly.

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For some unknown reason Krishnaji developed a filial attitude for Kusuma. The next time they met, he enquired, '*Amma*, how is your son? Is there any improvement?' Kusuma, who was lost in her thoughts, was startled and touched by his sudden enquiry. She replied, '*Annayya*, there is not an iota of improvement so far.'

U.G. interjected, 'Krishnaji, I'm certain no medicine in India bring him back to normal. I want to face stark realities and not escape from them by blaming fate. As per my estimate, the expenditure would come to 90,000 dollars. I garnered all my resources and the amount is almost ready.' Kusuma voiced her concern: 'What a tragedy! If the entire property and resources are spent for the boy, there won't be anything left for the other children. What about their future? Who will look after them? It will be a mess from many angles.'

'Yes, *Amma*, you're right. 90,000 dollars is a huge sum, a lot of money in Indian standards. It's a big ordeal. I can understand,' said Krishnaji nodding his head and raising his eyes.

'Besides, there's no guarantee that the boy will become normal after all this effort. Ultimately our lives will be in a whirlpool without financial security; how can we live?' Kusuma said on a sad note.

'You're right,' said Krishnaji. After that he entered a state of silence. The power of his silence radiated the entire room in a subtle manner. All of a sudden he broke the silence. '*Amma*, don't be carried away by circumstances. Be brave. We shall find some other solution for the festering problem,' he said to comfort her. He did not say how, by what method or what the alternative was for this agonizing plight.

His soothing words left a ray of hope in Kusuma. She was immersed in her own thoughts. Again there was silence in the room.

Looking into U.G.'s face, Krishnaji said reluctantly, 'Well, it is said that I have some healing powers. I haven't tried them for many years. Let me try them on your son. By some remote chance, it might help.' Krishnaji opened his hallowed heart.

Kusuma was zoomed into the skies; she was on cloud nine. A creeping excitement ran through her being. New worlds seemed to have opened. Krishnaji appeared as a savior. God must have granted her prayers through him.

Meanwhile, a gush of cool breeze swept into the room through the door that was ajar, forcing it open. It was mingled with a strong fragrance of flowers. The air also brought in rain from a mid-sized cloud which the wind had not had time to disperse.

U.G. was taken aback and was a bit puzzled. He never expected Krishnaji to come out in such a candid and transparent manner. Voluntarily and spontaneously Krishnaji offered his help. U.G. exclaimed, 'Krishnaji, I'm highly grateful, indeed; your generosity has no bounds. Well, personally I don't give any credence to such things. I'm a skeptic in these matters. I've heard that you have healed some ailments sporadically. But my son's case is of a different magnitude. Here, the life cells in his legs are dead. No one and nothing can restore them except medical technology, if I may say so. It's as impossible as infusing life into a rock. If you can help my son walk with your healing powers, then perhaps I'll believe that you have preternatural powers.'

Krishnaji maintained total silence as was his wont. Kusuma was upset. She was irritated and disappointed. What rubbish was his talking? Why would he not grab the opportunity?

U.G. continued, 'Well, Krishnaji, we heard of such powers. It is said that Jesus walked on water; probably he did not know how to swim. It is also said that he created many bread loaves and hundreds of fish; actually a huge loaf of bread might have been torn into pieces and a big fish might have been cut into a number of small bits. We read many such miracles by spiritual people,' he concluded rather humorously.

Krishnaji guffawed, waving his hand, 'Come on, U.G.'

Kusuma was disturbed and could not control herself. She was impatiently following her husband's comments. She thought to herself that he was such an oddball. He had his own quixotic way of thinking. She addressed U.G. and said peevishly, 'Why do you object when my dear brother is volunteering his services? Isn't it unwise to contradict?'

'Vasant is as much a son of yours as he is mine. But somehow I don't have faith in Krishnaji and his healing powers. That is my personal view. If you want to give it a try, I have no objection whatsoever,' said U.G., realizing that his wife was upset.

After a while, Krishnaji gazed into Kusuma's face and assured her, '*Amma*, tomorrow, in the morning, bring just your son. I'll do my best. We'll see how it works.' Kusuma heaved a sigh of relief, anticipating positive results.

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The next day came with a promise of hope and eagerness. U.G. and his wife came to Vasanta Vihar along with their son in a taxi. The sun was not bright and its rays were soft. A tiny depression in the sea on the previous night brought a moderate untimely rain. Every particle of dust was washed away. The sky was transparent; a few clouds were traveling leisurely. The water drops on the leaves resembled sliding pearls. Tree branches fluttered now and then when the breeze smooched over their heads. A few squirrels on the branches were drying themselves in the sunrays. Soaked baby birds perched silently and shriveled in their nests. Over the clear sky a row of birds flew eastward in a semi-circular way. A lone monkey was moving on the wall with a baby clinging under its belly.

The entire scenario of this colonial building was like a living canvas painted by Mother Nature. It seemed that there was a subtle interconnectedness among things.

U.G.'s family entered Krishnaji's abode. He received them warmly. His eyes were fixed on Vasant who clung to his mother's hip and shoulders like a lizard on the wall. Krishnaji went close to him, and touched his head softly while smiling. Vasant, who was afraid of strangers, shirked back, hugging his mother tightly. All of them sat in chairs comfortably.

Kusuma glanced at Krishnaji in reverence. U.G. was quiet. There was pin-drop silence. A strong breeze blew across the room. Krishnaji closed the main door and all windows except one.

He walked softly like a cat, brought a long-legged stool and placed it in the center of the room. He urged Kusuma to help the boy sit on the stool. But Vasant was not willing to comply. He was afraid. He looked at his mother with pitiful eyes, shook his head crossways indicating that he preferred to sit in her lap, clutching her shoulder with his hands tightly. The mother pacified him saying, 'My prince, if you sit on the stool grandpa will treat you. There is nothing to fear. When your legs become normal, you can jump and walk like your sisters. All of you can play hide and seek.'

Vasant reluctantly agreed. Kusuma helped him sit on the stool. Krishnaji stood erect and then bent down, bringing his hands gracefully together. His attention was riveted on Vasant's legs. He shut his eyes, kept silent for a moment and started squeezing them smoothly. His touch had an electrifying effect on the boy. Involuntarily he jerked a little. After that, the boy did not show the slightest sign of discomfort, as though it was a pleasurable moment for him. A mild breeze healingly whispered through the half-open window.

Krishnaji was squeezing top to bottom and bottom to top – he was strongly massaging Vasant's legs to activate the cells in them. He massaged his toes thoroughly, especially the two big toes. He carried on his healing for about 15 minutes. After that, he went to his bathroom to wash his hands and returned. U.G. picked up the stool and placed it in a corner.

Kusuma was elated. She developed a strong faith in Krishnaji. U.G. was wonderstruck

by Krishnaji's ministrations. Why was he giving such attention to his family? What did he hope to prove? Was it a cardinal virtue of his spiritual personality? A sense of deep respect had taken hold of U.G.

'Krishnaji, I don't know how to express my profound thanks,' said U.G. 'No, no, there is nothing special in this. Let's wait and see the result,' responded Krishnaji.

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On every alternate day, whenever it was convenient for him and however preoccupied he might otherwise have been, Krishnaji was massaging Vasant as a bounden duty. A good rapport ensued between the two. Because of the familiarity, Vasant began to believe his mother's words, 'Grandpa is a divine incarnation.' The boy did not know the subtle aspects of life but he knew one thing, namely, that this grandpa was a good man. He felt immense happiness when Krishnaji massaged his legs softly. There was an unknown thrill in his childish mind. One day he might be able to walk like his sisters.

Kusuma began to feel that there was some improvement in her son. He appeared to feel better than earlier. Previously he was struggling hard to stand by himself, but now he was a bit successful. That was a marked positive result. How could she believe otherwise?

But U.G. did not agree. He squarely ruled out any progress. He exclaimed, 'Kusuma, You're deluding yourself. Your eyes are deceiving you. A deluded mind can create anything. Believe me, as I said earlier, I've no faith in his healing powers. But don't think that I'm objecting to this treatment. I wouldn't want to hurt a mother's feelings. But take it from me, this will land you nowhere. We're going to America for sure. It's written on the wall. When? I'm working on the details.'

Kusuma kept quiet. She shuddered at the very mention of America. By all means she wanted to avoid it.

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Once, a dance performance was held in Kalakshetra at Adyar. Kusuma got her daughters ready to go along with her. She was exceedingly meticulous in the dress she wore. She decked her children with jewelry, applied lampblack on their eyelids and decorated their hair with flowers. Vasant was left under the care of Lakshmi. They all ambled slowly toward Kalakshetra like a royal procession going for a wedding.

On the road they ran into Krishnaji. He was returning from his evening walk. Kusuma and the children greeted him. Krishnaji observed them intently for a few moments. '*Amma*, where you are you going?' He enquired. 'There is a dance performance in Kalakshetra. We are all going there to attend it, *Annayya*,' she replied politely.

Krishnaji slowly said in a paternal voice, '*Amma*, I don't understand why you and your children have decorated yourselves down to the hilt? Do you like so much jewelry?' There was some sarcasm in his question. Kusuma was perplexed and piqued. She kept silent looking down at the ground embarrassed.

Krishnaji went on: 'Why all this unnecessary make up? It all looks artificial, gaudy and distasteful. Children should always look simple and pleasing to the eye. A white dress is proper and suitable for them; it gives them a lovable quality and pleasing dignity. Why have you decked them like dolls?'

Kusuma's enthusiasm and pride were punctured. This was most unexpected. She murmured rather incoherently, 'the children have a fancy for these things and so....'

'It's the adults who force them to wear the jewelry whether they like it or not. They don't allow them to grow in a natural manner, do they? I am awfully sorry, I have detained you long,' he said tersely and moved on.

Kusuma felt that her inner entrails were squeezed like a wet sponge. Tears rolled down her cheeks. The children looked at their mother with muted eyes. She lost all interest in attending the dance concert. After a moment of indecision, like a wounded animal, she charged to the program reluctantly. But she could not enjoy the dance. Krishnaji's words rang in her ears. She left the auditorium abruptly along with the children.

Her landlord, Dr. Kamat, was standing near the entrance. He noticed Kusuma grim and silent. She looked like a defeated soldier. 'What happened?' he asked her, 'What's the matter? You look in totally disarray; why you have left the program in the middle?' Her simmering discontent burst open; somehow she controlled her rush of thoughts and answered, 'Your great guru did not relish our make up; he gave a sermon for half an hour and left.'

'Who, Krishnaji?'

'Yes, he thinks that children should be dressed in white. No jewelry, no flowers... and so on, so forth; he threw a thousand preachings at us. How is it possible to keep the children so simple as though we are poor people? It's our custom to beautify our daughters and we enjoy our jewelry. Why should my daughters be left plain like street urchins? I felt insulted and my feelings were hurt,' Kusuma bemoaned.

She went into her apartment and removed all the children's jewelry. She changed her clothes, fed the children, attended on her son and waited for her husband to return.

Now, Kusuma began to review the incident in her mind calmly: 'I might have criticized Krishnaji before Kamat forgetting all propriety. Maybe I shouldn't have done so. Did I overreact to Krishnaji's words? Yes, Krishnaji, for some unknown reason, treats us as special, considering us as his own people. I misunderstood him. His taste and tenor are different. Actually what's wrong them? When I think again, it seems that his advice was reasonable indeed. My husband too thinks the same way. He too does not like exhibition of jewelry and artificiality. I was merely following my tradition.'

At last she reconciled herself. She decided to forget the whole incident as a trifle. Late in the night U.G. returned home. At dinner, while serving the food, she narrated the incident to him. 'Yes, Kusuma, Krishnaji is right. I told you umpteen times that

children should look simple. They always should grow in a natural manner,' exclaimed U.G.

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33. Moving Abroad

U.G. had irrevocably decided to take his son Vasant to America for treatment in spite of Krishnaji's healing work. Kusuma vehemently opposed the idea of selling away all their property for this purpose. Her two growing daughters needed money for their education and marriage. And marriage involved huge amounts in the name of dowry and gold jewelry. Accumulation of gold was the measure of any family's style and status.

One day, U.G. called his wife into his study room and explained the details of his new plan:

> Look, Kusuma, I've decided never to waver from my stand; our visit to America is imminent. You're hoping that Krishnaji would resolve the crisis. But it's not going to be the case. My great respect to him is an undeniable fact. I have had a thousand philosophical differences with him but not with his magnanimous personality. But believe me; his massage will have no effect. Let's be rational and realistic.
>
> I weighed the pros and cons of the present situation. By selling away all the property we'll have a cash balance of about 90 thousand dollars. In the present circumstances, I wish to divide it into three shares. I'll give you one share and another share to Bharati and Usha. With the third share I'll take Vasant to America for treatment. They say that treatment will only take six months. If it takes longer, I'll manage somehow and stay there till it's completed.

Kusuma listened to his words with a crestfallen face. She was besieged by relevant and irrelevant thoughts.

U.G. continued:

> Kusuma, listen carefully; don't be carried away by emotions. Emotions have little role to play here. Now, you are a mother of three children. You are mature enough to tackle the problem. You have a degree and you are also talented and intelligent. You have to cultivate mental fortitude and grit so that you can stand on your legs. Try to settle in any place of your choice with the children. Don't think "how can I live all alone without my husband's shade or support?" You have to adjust yourself to the changing circumstances. Don't nurture sentiments and cling to useless traditional values which are not going to solve problems.

Kusuma listened attentively; she could not gauge what he was up to or what the conversation was leading to. His words were hinting at an ominous and unpleasant future.

He went on:

> You have to live independently. Leave me to myself and don't bother about me. Whatever co-operation and help you need, I will extend it wherever I may be.

> When the situation warrants, we have to take the right decision by facing hard realities boldly.

He abruptly stopped for a moment, thought for a while and said in a rather sad note, 'If you are willing and if you feel that it would be beneficial, I don't... I don't... mind..., I can give even you a legal divorce.'

A thunderbolt fell on Kusuma. Divorce was anathema to her, unthinkable, unimaginable and even unutterable. She felt suffocated in her chest and throat. Her body was gripped by a sudden numbness. Her fragile, sensitive nature tattered. Her ego was blown to smithereens. She became tremulous.

A terrible agonizing silence reigned over them. The midday hot wind was blowing across the room. Outside, some birds made weird sounds passing over the sky. The lone lizard on the wall made an unpleasant noise.

'What do you mean? Why do you utter such nonsensical trash? Are you in your senses? Is it not unbecoming of your personality? Why are you stamping your feet at me? You are making me a sacrificial goat in your scheme of things,' she said after a pause. 'I never, ever visualized in my wildest dreams that you would discard me like a cracked mirror on a flimsy pretext,' she shrieked on a hysterical note. A bitter resentment passed across her face as if she had been provoked by a distasteful and disagreeable situation. She was trembling. Insecurity rankled with her; she sank into deep despair and anguish. She lacked her individuality. She wanted so much to be under husband's shelter.

U.G. immediately rose to his feet to pacify her, slowly caressing her shoulders. He said, 'Calm down, Kusuma. I only said it in case there is a need for it. Treat it in that fashion. I am not really intending to divorce you. It is only an opinion but not an option. Cool down, don't be so upset.'

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As usual, Krishnaji was attired in a milk-white silk *kurta* and pajama. The room was tidy with clean window curtains and the Persian carpet was dusted. The morning cool breeze wafted through the windows. The atmosphere was radiant. The entire ambience was serene; indescribable peace untouched by the mundane world was flowing as if Krishnaji was a divine being who had come down to earth to alleviate men's problems and frailties. Flowers and vines emanated their mingled fragrance in the clear morning air like a soothing balm.

Sparrows had a special fascination for Krishnaji wherever he might be. They came in from outside, chirped for a while and flew back.

After massaging Vasant legs, Krishnaji sat on his chair quietly. After some time, the issue between Kusuma and U.G. came up for discussion before Krishnaji in the presence of U.G.

She poignantly unbosomed her heart before Krishnaji: '*Annayya*, how unkindly he is speaking! He even went to the extent of offering to divorce me; somehow he wants to get rid of me from his life. Why? I'm unable to fathom his mind. As if I'm greedy for money he offered some share in the property and asked me to live alone with my children. What will be the fate of my girls? Who will look after them without their father's care and love? Do you think this is right? How could he think that our martial bondage is so loose?'

Krishnaji patiently listened to her every word. He gazed at her and trying to infuse self–confidence in her, said: '*Amma*, why do you feel so timid and helpless? You are a mature woman and a mother of three children. They are more important to you than your husband. If you are soft and meek in your manners, he will boss over you. Why don't you call a spade a spade? Revolt against him. Brush aside the customary life enjoined by tradition. You're not a puppet in his hands. Show him that you are a powerful woman. Try to stand on your own legs. Why do you need his support?'

Kusuma was stunned at Krishnaji's advice. She did not except such advice at all. What was this? He was speaking the same language as U.G.

She heaved a big sigh and spoke, '*Annayya*, if I had been so bold, dashing and chivalrous, I would not have spoken out my heart to you like this in front of my husband. I thought you would advice him to stay back and help me out.'

Now, Krishnaji was taken aback. After a pause, he swept a glace at Kusuma and leaned a bit closer to show that he fully sympathized with her. '*Amma*, it's just your sheer timorous attitude gaining an upper hand. This type of mental slavery has been inherited by women for generations. I disagree with it. If he doesn't care for your opinions, don't care for him. If you are not happy with him, break away such bonds without hesitation. Your life is not limited to your husband. You have a right to move away from your husband's oppression. This freedom cannot be granted to you by anyone; you have to snatch it yourself. If he obstructs you in any way, bomb him. Show him your real strength and stand firm,' he concluded on an emphatic note.

Kusuma relapsed into a big dilemma. U.G never interfered in their frank and free conversations. He kept quiet and aloof as an onlooker.

After a few minutes Krishnaji continued, '*Amma*, don't be depressed. Face life as it comes. As long as I'm in Madras, I'll continue to massage your son. Shortly I'm leaving for Greece. From there, I'll go to California and return to India in December. U.G., please postpone your journey to America till then; we shall then decide what we should do.'

It was already decided that Krishnaji would stay in Madras for eight more weeks.

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On that day, there were no public talks scheduled. Krishnaji finished massaging Vasant. They were all involved in conversation. Vasant sat in the lap of his mother. Bharati and

Usha were picking odd stones and dried flowers under a tree. The atmosphere was serene. A few white spongy clouds in different shapes slowly passed over the sky. A few rows of birds were flying on their migratory route. There was an unfathomable silence in the room. Krishnaji slowly enquired U.G., 'Which school do you send your children to?'

'They go to Besant Theosophy School, near our residence'.

Krishnaji remarked, 'They're preaching religion there, Sir.' U.G. replied, 'What's wrong in it?' What else do they do in the Rishi Valley School? I was told that the children there are forced to get up in the morning, taken to the top of a hillock and asked to "observe the sunrise, behold the wonderful colors and watch the nature all around." This is being practiced every day, deliberately. The splendor of the sunrise on the hills may be wonderful to all of you. But I wonder how the young kids appreciate it. They are forcibly taken there and shown the natural scenery. Why thrust it on them?' U.G. stopped abruptly.

Krishnaji heard calmly. U.G. went on: 'You are objecting to their teaching religion here. There you are forcing the children to watch sunrise and sunset whether they like them or not. What's the difference between the two? I was in the Guindy National School here in my childhood for only three days. You once visited the school and preached something to us. None of us could understand it. We watched you blankly. Nothing great was achieved in those regimented schools except confusion and conflict. I immediately left for my native place, Gudiwada, and studied in a roadside school. What did I lose?' Kusuma wondered why her husband was so contrary.

Krishnaji kept silent. There was still no change in his demeanor; he looked like a statue in a temple. He was beyond bouquets and brickbats.

After some time Krishnaji said, 'U.G., why don't you admit your children in the Rishi valley school?'

U.G. was bit surprised. He was still asking after knowing his views about those schools. 'Very sorry, Krishnaji, I don't have any preference for such special methods in education. Children should learn to live in the world in a natural way. By trial and error they will know the ups and downs in the society. To achieve these ends, ordinary schools with all their virtues and vices are enough,' replied U.G. After few moments, he went on, 'I don't know whether you are aware of it or not, apparently some students of Rishi Valley School are abruptly discontinuing their studies. Why are they doing it? They're kept away from the mainstream of the society, placed in a rigid frame, with little breathing room. They lost their natural choice. If they continue for some more time, I believe they will finally become misfits without much worldly knowledge.'

Kusuma was excited at the mention of the Rishi Valley School. She had heard of its reputation. The school is situated in beautiful natural surroundings, amidst hillocks and trees and far from the madding crowd of civilization. By nature Kusuma possessed creative faculties and imaginative abilities. She wanted to express her creativity and she had a special flair for innovation.

'*Annayya*, if you don't have any objection, I'll work there and stay there with my children. I have a great fascination for such natural ambience. Will you please allow me to work there?' she said enthusiastically. She thought her response was appropriate to the present context in her life.

U.G. was not surprised at her response. He kept silent, but Krishnaji rolled his eyes and said, '*Amma*, how will it be possible? You don't have enough time to look after your crippled son. Moreover, it's a hard and time-consuming job.'

After a few moments, Krishnaji looked at U.G. in meaningfully and said, 'U.G. why don't you stay there for some time? I need your presence.' U.G. kept silent.

Taking his silence as part willingness, Krishnaji added, 'In case you don't like the conditions and methods of teaching there, we shall drastically change the whole edifice, according to your ideas, and if necessary, we shall dismantle it and rebuild it brick by brick. We will infuse it with innovative ideas.'

U.G. responded, 'Krishnaji, I'll agree to your proposal on one condition. If you too stay in the Rishi Valley School and pay due attention to it by running the school, I'll cooperate with you wholeheartedly. Take the example of Rabindranath Tagore. He dedicated all his energies to Santi Niketan. Could you do it? Will you give up your world tours?'

Krishnaji was silent for a length of time and answered: 'It's my bounden duty, my *dharma,* to travel around the world. It wouldn't be possible for me to stay at one place. Nonetheless, every year I'm spending one month at Rajghat and one month in the Rishi Valley School.'

Near Madanapalli, Chittoor District, Krishnaji established the Rishi Valley School. It's a residential school built on a hundreds of acres of land surrounded by hillocks. He always discussed passionately about the improvement of the school with his inner circle of friends.

The methods of teaching in that school were unique. The training given to the children depended upon their interests and aptitude. No pressure was put on them regarding their learning. Teachers encouraged the children to express their proclivities and creative faculties. There was no intimidation, scolding or punishment. Children were absolutely free to choose their interests.

Such natural growth of children in their formative years was expected to prepare them to become good citizens with exemplary character and honesty so that in their future lives they could work for the ongoing development of the society. They were expected to lead a life free of conflict.

The teachers in the school were selected through careful screening and given the necessary training in teaching methods. The Rishi Valley School was regarded as one of the best private schools in India.

'Krishnaji, I know that Rishi Valley School is very dear to you, and you pay much attention to the school whenever possible, as you said just now. The school was established more than 25 years ago. A number of children studied there. They went out to lead their future lives. I have some nagging doubts in this context; would you mind clearing them?' asked U.G. Krishnaji softly smiled and said, 'Shoot!'

'You all believe that the special training in this school helps children to have truthful values and goals in life. The student is expected to live righteously thereafter without any unethical trappings. I would like to know, is there any former student of this institution living such an ideal life as he or she was expected?' U.G. queried.

Kusuma was attentively listening to their conversation; Vasant was sleeping on her shoulder. A cool breeze rushed in through the open door. Somewhere there was a faint humming of birds. Krishnaji kept his mysterious silence.

'Krishnaji, at least tell me whether it's possible to really achieve those values and goals, inspired by your methods,' U.G. demanded.

Breaking his silence, Krishnaji replied in the protracted way characteristic of him, 'Whatever training is given, I don't think it's possible to achieve such noble standards and high values in life.'

U.G. was surprised; but he appreciated the honesty in Krishnaji's reply. He retorted, 'Then, what's point in continuing to impart such impracticable ideals which can't be implemented in life? Isn't it a utopian concept?'

Krishnaji again maintained silence. 'All right, do the teachers who teach these children live in a dedicated manner according to your ideals?' U.G. questioned again.

Krishnaji's silence continued. 'Your silence is causing doubt and misunderstanding. Kindly answer me, Krishnaji,' insisted U.G.

Krishnaji replied, 'Regarding the educational system for future citizens I have my own views. Children should be encouraged to develop by themselves in a free and independent manner. Their creative abilities and innate intelligence, which have been dormant in them, should be drawn out and awakened. It may take some time to achieve these desired objectives; but what's wrong in trying to develop future citizens with noble intentions and objectives?'

U.G. snapped at him, 'Innocent children are turned into guinea pigs and experiments are made on them and their future lives. I'm sorry to say, this is cruel!'

Krishnaji looked unmindful of the criticism voiced by U.G. Instead, he smiled at him enchantingly.

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As usual, after the massage of Vasant on that day, they all sat together engaged in conversation. Bharati and Usha were not present; at home there were relatives visiting from Machilipatnam.

The discussion centered on married life and the relationship between husband and wife. As was his wont, U.G. countered Krishnaji and asserted that 'Marriage is like a contract approved by society with its stipulated rules.' The discussion was prolonged and a special reference was made to sex. 'The bond between a wife and a husband revolves around sex and nothing but sex,' asserted U.G.

The moment the word "sex" was mentioned, Krishnaji shriveled like a coy dove. He shook his head in disagreement.

'Sorry, Krishnaji, let me put in a crude way: as I have said earlier, marriage is just like any institution, a kind of compromise between licentiousness and virtue, a recognized one, only to quench the collective libido to keep the species going.'

'There must be a cordial egoless bond of love between them. Its possession is not only the road that leads to satisfy but is a gift of transporting the couple into the subtleties of life.'

U.G. smiled. 'I don't buy this theory. I am not interested in abstract concepts which are not practiced by anyone. They are all born out of poetic fancy. In their stilted, swanky poetry real truth is submerged.'

Krishnaji was silent. Till then Kusuma had been following their discussions as a mere spectator. But, suddenly, she interjected and exclaimed, '*Annayya*, if you don't mind, I venture to ask you a question regarding sex. Did you ever actually experience the pleasure of copulation?'

Krishnaji never expected that a woman would pose such a question straight to him. He looked the part of a Victorian moralist he was raised to be. U.G.'s face turned crimson in embarrassment. Yet he appreciated his wife's daring question. Krishnaji was at a loss for words. He remained silent for a moment. His face reddened a little; he dropped his eyes. He then said, 'what an impertinent question, *Amma*, and irrelevant too.'

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That morning, due to some unavoidable circumstances, U.G. could not accompany Kusuma on her visit to Krishnaji. She went to Vasant Vihar by a taxi along with her son.

The morning sky was clear. Golden sunrays were strewn all over Vasanta Vihar. Krishnaji completed the massage. After washing his hands he returned to his chair. As usual, two sparrows flew from outside, perched on window sill, chirped for a while and flew away after greeting Krishnaji. He sat straight and erect and radiated grace. The ambience around him would purify disturbed souls, leaving a soothing effect in them.

An ever-intensifying and inexhaustible love emanated from his spiritual inner fountain. In this exquisite atmosphere one could forget the quagmire of mundane issues.

Kusuma unburdened herself of all her personal problems freely and frankly, without any inhibitions. Krishnaji spoke at length and concluded, 'Women should be free from their mental slavery. It's the basic reason for all their sorrows.' His talk had a salutary effect on her. He unearthed a stream of confidence in her mind.

The next day too she came alone and discussed her life at length with Krishnaji. She paid several personal visits to him. Now an irrevocable decision took shape in her mind; she waited for an opportunity to fulfill her ambition.

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It is interesting to know that Telugu was Krishnaji's mother tongue. But for more than forty years he had never conversed in Telugu. His total personality was molded in English. He was brought up in an alien environment where there was no place for his mother tongue.

But most people were not aware that he could understand Telugu to a great extent. He rarely spoke the language, and if he did, it was in broken bits. However, he forced himself to speak in broken Telugu with Bharati, Usha and Vasant. U.G. and Kusuma spoke with him in English. Sometimes, Kusuma would speak in Telugu only to get her point across.

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U.G. could feel that something was on a changing spiral in his mental sphere just as rain starts with a slight drizzle and develops into a downpour. This changing scenario was spontaneous without his involvement.

Now, a new chapter was being opened in his life. The dormant forces within himself were about to sprout. There was a remarkable and revelatory change in his perception – abstract things and missing links were coming within his grasp. There was a complete revitalization and revival in his outlook. His perceptions had acquired a different timbre and dimension that indicated a total transformation in the normal pattern of viewing things, a mystical epiphany of some sort.

What could be source of this? U.G. indulged himself in critical self-examination: what on earth was he up to? He could see that this transformation had taken its birth after the grisly "death experience" in Krishnaji's presence.

It was not a passing phase. An experience of such magnitude cannot be had by volition. It was beyond thought and boundaries of the will. Thought can produce profound experiences, but not of this nature. Perhaps that was the reason why Krishnaji had discussed it with him for three days.

It was unparalleled; nowhere was it described in spiritual lore or traditional literature. It was not written in the biographies of spiritual giants. However, it was known to have

occurred in the life of Ramana Maharshi. He had the experience of death, and after that, he underwent a radical change. He left his home never to return. He settled in Arunachala. After a considerable time, he hit the "deck of Ultimate Truth".

Just as a huge banyan tree grows out of a small mustard-like seed, U.G. had matured out of proportions in his own way. This mystical change exploded him to the skies. U.G. was ready for the unfoldment. With this background he now possessed a "spiritual imprimatur" of the highest order to start a gigantic organization attracting thousands of people into his fold.

Under this spiritual ciborium he could establish a new-fangled philosophy, earn millions of dollars and attain world fame and name. But he was not cut out for such things. His credo was different. He stoutly questioned even this "original mighty experience" and totally rejected it. It was characteristic of U.G. to surpass all entanglements, temptations, trappings and stand honestly without any regrets.

Notably, U.G. had this death experience in the presence of Krishnaji. Was there any significance to this? Did the august presence of Krishnaji play a catalytic role in its occurrence? U.G. felt that Krishnaji's presence was merely accidental. The experience was destined to occur, wherever he might be. But what transpired in the esoteric plane is beyond human ken.

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One day, Bhave asked U.G., 'Your friendship with Krishnaji is becoming thicker and stronger. It seems that he likes you immensely. People here are wondering at the special treatment of Krishnaji for your family. What would you say?'

After a long pause U.G. answered bluntly, 'I'm highly indebted to him, indeed. I don't know if I'm right, but I must say, he may be using me as a sounding board to test the effect of his philosophical thinking on others. I'm not interested in this game. I'm off. I stopped discussing any philosophical matters with him. I'm sorry.'

Bhave was shocked at U.G.'s response. He thought to himself, 'It's well–known that Krishnaji does not use anyone for his selfish ends. How come U.G. holds such a strange opinion?'

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34. Final Break with Krishnaji

The ancient Indian philosophers and thinkers were inimitable and unchallenged in the spiritual history of mankind. They were ultimate masters in micro level dissecting, logging, synthesizing and analyzing philosophical issues. In U.G.'s view, Krishnaji's philosophical thinking and teachings, his discourses, dialogues, and discussions were molehills before the achievements of ancient Indian spiritual thinkers.

Yet, unbeknown to anyone, Krishnaji might have stumbled upon the Ultimate Reality by his own *sadhana*. However, he was unable to express clearly and coherently the "Absolute Truth" to his audience. He renounced a huge spiritual empire which extended to the four corners of the world. It was a heroic deed, indeed, by any standards.

He spurned disciples, dethroned mentors, decimated preceptors and carved a niche for himself beyond doubt. He invented no new cult, faith or dogma. He brutally questioned everything.

What was his state of being? On which pedestal was he safely perched? How was he transformed? With what authority was he bestowed? Had he reached his apogee?

U.G. wanted to know sincerely and directly from him a number of times, but failed to get the response he had desired. He never got straight answers. Why did he always find escape routes? His answers were twisted, slippery and ambiguous. There were some obscurities and veiled references in his life. Why couldn't he wipe out his entire past and come out clean? Why could he not reveal the facts? U.G. was left with a quiver full of questions and doubts which were left unanswered. He could not digest Krishnaji's irritating silence.

'Krishnaji, if I were in your place I would have come out clearly and straightforwardly. How many times have I asked you what is the "state of being" you are in? What's the use of hollow flowery words, decorative descriptions you throw at us? Now I'm sincerely asking you, is there any Absolute Truth? With your poetic flair and creative afflatus, you're bamboozling, something in which I'm least interested. Compared to the ancient Indian scholars of spiritual thinking, your commentaries are shallow. From the way you're speaking, your words do have a hieroglyphic character. It appears that you're in a "different state of being". But speaking in a traditional manner, I suspect that you might at least have seen the sugar, though you might not have actually tasted it. Well, what I mean is whether there is any such thing as "Absolute Truth". And have you grasped it?' asked U.G bluntly.

As usual, there was a lull. No answer came from Krishnaji. He lowered his starry eyes on U.G. and smiled indulgently.

How could Krishnaji express the inexpressible? How could he measure the immeasurable? How could he divide the undivided whole?

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Krishnaji was used to going on a walk every day in the morning and in the evening. Some times U.G. would accompany him for the walk. Krishnaji, being a Good Samaritan, had a strange habit of picking up nails, glass pieces and blades that he might find on the beach and throwing them in a safe place. U.G. observed this several times. One day, to tease him, U.G. would point to a nail or shiny glass piece and say, 'Krishnaji, you missed that.' Krishnaji would promptly pick it up, too.

That day, they both were on the seaside for an evening walk. The sun slowly set on the sea folding its golden-bronze wings. It is an evening penumbra. Yonder, where the sea and sky were juxtaposed under a luminous haze, a few fishermen rowed ashore. A few catamarans dangled and danced in the waves on their return journey. Some fishermen were repairing their boats. Seagulls hovered in the sky. A fisher woman carrying a basket full of fish was cross at them.

A young boy came running towards them and extended his hand asking for a handout. Krishnaji turned to U.G. and asked, 'U.G., do you have a little change? U.G. shook his head negatively. Krishnaji felt unhappy, touched the boy's head affectionately and embraced him softly. The boy was bewildered by his kindness; so far no one gave him such a hug. He walked away.

U.G. smiled and said, 'Krishnaji, that poor boy doesn't care for your hugs or kind looks. Your love is not useful for him. He needs your money.'

Strangely, next day, they met the same boy at the same spot on the beach stretching his hand out. Krishnaji was embarrassed by his empty pockets and turned to U.G. helplessly. Now, U.G. had a little money with him. He gave him a rupee coin. The boy was expecting small change but not a rupee. He was overjoyed in disbelief. He ran away shouting happily.

U.G. remarked, 'Krishnaji, have you noticed his pent up joy? He wants money.' Krishnaji smiled and kept quiet.

One day on their walk, U.G. said:

'Krishnaji, I don't buy the theory that you are destined to uplift the humanity. I don't believe that you have a divine mission to fulfill. Well, however patiently you tour the four corners of the world as a peripatetic philosopher and address the audiences by kindling their spirits, it yields no results. They appear to reflect on what you say for the time being; but later they revert to their usual self without any perceptible change. You may reject the Theosophical Society but you owe everything to it, because they made you what you are today. You too sing along with their tunes of Universal Brotherhood, *Vasudhaika Kutumbam*,[81] peaceful coexistence and working for human welfare. That's all rubbish to me. You cannot bring out transformation, even a modicum of it, in your audience by your love, freedom, peace, and so on and so forth. I strongly think that man will not and shall not change basically, because his inner nature is such; it is fixed like stars and mountains. Man will not yield to virtue, love, compassion and cooperation. For example, if we look into human history, thousands of wars occurred

for selfish ends. There has been massacre, plundering and pogrom in the name of religion or otherwise. Why? If people assimilated the teachings of prophets, saviors and *jagadgurus*,[82] the world would have been a paradise on earth.'

Krishnaji listened to him intently. U.G. continued,

'Man is fundamentally selfish; self–centered activity is his very existence. Man is cruel, crooked, foolish, kinky and beastly—these are my observations of the world over the years through my reading and observing. So, the desire to make entire world one happy unit, make it peaceful and walk on a single thread is mere myth, tommyrot.'

Krishnaji was reticent with an imperturbable mien. After a while, he questioned, 'Can you remain quiet like a silent spectator observing all these conflicts, afflictions and pitfalls? You don't feel sorry?' U.G. replied, 'No one has any responsibility or license to uplift the world. As for myself, I would not care for it or feel sorry for it.'

Krishnaji exclaimed rather sorrowfully,

'How could you be an indifferent observer without any reaction, untouched by the horrible situation? When the house is burning in your very presence and the surroundings are reverberating with human cries will you remain a passive spectator? As a fellow human being don't you feel it's your bounden duty to put out the flames and bring in order? How could you keep silent?'

'When the whole system is burning as such, let it burn; I prefer to pour more petrol on it for rapid destruction. From the remains and ashes of it a new system may evolve like a phoenix bird,' concluded U.G. on a pungent note.

'O God, you are impossible,' said Krishnaji laughing mildly.

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When U.G. and Krishnaji went for their frequent walks there were serious discussions as well as friendly arguments. There was a type of undeclared cold war between them, some sort of ambivalence. As for U.G., he failed to see through the opaque cloud of Krishnaji's life. U.G. was hell-bent on eliciting direct answers which Krishnaji avoided carefully.

> Krishnaji, excuse me for my temerity. I am repeating the questions time and again. There are several doubts, misconceptions, misunderstandings about you from your past. Come out clean. Till now you haven't clarified them. You maintain protracted silence as though silence is your very existence. Now I want to ask you a straight question. For example, when I asked you about the Masters, you replied, "I did not deny the existence of the Masters." Well, I am forced again to ask you; give me a direct answer: are the Masters real or not?

After a long pause Krishnaji said, 'U.G., whatever I say will become an authority and a standard.'

'No, no! Again you are following the same old slippery track. Say "yes" or "no." I want to hear the actual truth directly from you. The book which was said to be written by you, *At the Feet of Masters,* was actually penned by Bishop Leadbeater. This is the view of a majority of the people. You please clarify it,' demanded U.G. on a rather frustrated note.

Krishnaji changed the topic of conversation: 'U.G., how are the anniversary celebrations of the Theosophical Society going on? What are the latest developments?' He enquired.

U.G felt utterly disappointed and demoralized but he controlled himself. 'Please leave them to themselves. That's all a hollow affair. Just like politicians they're fighting with one another for positions.'

U.G. paused for a while and echoed:

'Krishnaji, you appear to have disconnected yourself from Theosophy. But you still smack of Theosophy. I am tempted to tell you the story from the *Avadhuta Gita,* authored by sage Dattatreya. A sage was traveling in the countryside and stayed in an inn. The owner of the inn asked him, "Swami, what is your teaching?" The sage replied honestly, "There is no teacher, there is no teaching, and there is no one to be taught." So saying, the sage left the inn. The man was baffled. Krishnaji, you too repeat that story. But, somehow you try to preserve the pristine purity of your teaching for posterity. That's the difference.'

Krishnaji again smiled and kept silent. The duration of eight weeks of Krishnaji's stay in Madras was coming to an end. That morning, Krishnaji, finished massaging Vasant and returned to his chair. Kusuma was recalling her personal talks with him.

Krishnaji was in high spirits. Breaking the silence, U.G. asked:

'Krishnaji, you don't follow the traditional way of speaking about Reality, Truth, Self–realization, enlightenment, and so on. You very cleverly blend modern psychology and use modern terminology in your talks. But after sometime, you suddenly reverse yourself and say that psychoanalysis is a mere waste. What are you up to? Why is there a dichotomy? People receiving your tonic of spiritual teachings are becoming sicker and more invalid. They can't gauge what you are projecting to them. Your entire discourse appears to enter through their one ear and leave from the other. Why is it so Krishnaji? About the method you preach to people all over the world, did you "hit the deck" by comprehending Reality? Your terminology before the Second World War was entirely different from what it is now. Then, it had recondite, mystical and poetical overtones. But now you are changed; now, you project a modern method, ushering in new terminology. I call this the "Krishnamurti lingo".'

Kusuma heard all this rather perfunctorily. Her body was present but not her mind. Her mind was busy worrying about her future course of action.

U.G. continued,

'Krishnaji, What you speak currently is an admixture of the imported theories of Freud, Jung, Rank and Adler. You try to blend intellectual and intuitive language with religion; you use this hybrid language with a slant to examine, analyze, dissect and study philosophy deeply and infuse your listeners with such new-fangled ideas. Thus, you're anxious to provide new toys to your listeners to play with. In my childhood days we were playing with the toys made of simple deadwood. But, now, you're providing toys which can walk, talk and even dance to any tune.'

Krishnaji listened to U.G. patiently and replied smoothly, 'My method, if it works, it does; if it doesn't, it doesn't.' He smiled at U.G. indulgently.

Krishnaji was to leave Madras within a few days. In the ongoing drama the curtain was slowly drawing to a close. Krishnaji massaged Vasant for the last time and said, '*Amma*, I'm leaving shortly. Here my job is over. Let's wait for the results. Let's hope for the best. Please keep me informed of the condition of the boy wherever I may be. Remember I will be very pleased to receive your letters. Good luck to you.'

Kusuma said, 'Definitely, *Annayya*, We are all indebted to you. I will always cherish these moments preciously.' Her eyes were wet with tears.

They took leave of Krishnaji and left. That was the last time Kusuma saw Krishnaji in person.

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On the day prior to his departure, U.G. came alone to visit Krishnaji to pay his respects. They had a causal talk for some time. At one point Krishnaji interjected, 'Well, U.G., what are the current programs of the Theosophical Society?'

As U.G. already developed an aversion for the Society, he gave a brief and dry answer. Silence pervaded in the room. U.G. posed a question:

'Krishnaji, my doubts are still unresolved. As you proclaimed once, doubt is the mother of all enquiry. Now let me ask a pertinent question: In your talks you often say, "Let's all go into it together, in this ongoing journey." What is your actual position? Are you already stationed in that destination or are you traveling along with all of us? For example, you use words such as "Love", "Death", "Peace" and so forth. You speak about them at length, logically, philosophically and analytically. And suddenly you converge to a focal point, scan the audience and ask, "Now, I understand it; do you understand it?" To me all this is melodrama. To put in another way, I call it a burlesque. It's nothing but spiritual mishmash. In that particular situation, the minds of the listeners become barren and bizarre. In your talks, you may be flying high in the sky, speaking about Love, Bliss and Beatitude and so on, but we remain stuck on the ground with blurred and distorted minds. All this drama appears to me like pouring water in a pot which has holes plugged with pieces of cloth. The pot appears to be filled. But later, the water oozes out through the cloth pieces slowly. In the end we are

disillusioned. All your "journeys" are bogus chartered flights. We remain where we are, standstill.'

Krishnaji patiently followed the criticism of U.G. on an untouched note, smiled softly said, 'Come on, my old chappie, *au revoir*.' U.G. took leave of him. The next day Krishnaji left for Rajghat.

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The million dollar question left unanswered was why Krishnaji had shown so much interest in and generosity for U.G. and his family.

But, after the "death experience", U.G. began to understand many things which had hitherto been hazy or incomprehensible; now he could grasp them with some clarity. He had many tiffs with Krishnaji but now new doors were opened to enter the depths of his spiritual parameters. This was the pivotal outcome of his death experience.

But a great magnitude of mind-boggling manifestation was yet to come. One day, all of sudden, a host of supernatural powers incarnated themselves in U.G. spontaneously and automatically. He was overwhelmed and almost suffocated by those gigantic miraculous powers. He was able to see the past, present and future life an individual. He came to understand that these powers such as clairaudience, clairvoyance and precognition are embedded in the entrails of human consciousness. They could not have been derived from an outside agency. No amount of *sadhana* can bestow them; they have to occur on their own accord. He also observed that these psychic powers welled up spontaneously; yet they could also be summoned at will.

U.G. tried his predictions on some persons. Later, he came to know that his predictions had in fact happened accurately, as he had predicted, but unfortunately they also brought great agony to some. Since then U.G. stopped experimenting with his powers.

There are several dimensions in the field of spirituality. These manifestations are traditionally considered a cheap stage. They are a stumbling block in the onward spiritual journey. Most people who acquire these latent powers misuse them for their selfish ends. It is difficult not to yield to their temptations.

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35. Showdown with Theosophy

U.G.'s unfurled flag of the Theosophical Society had at last folded itself never to re-open. His interest in the Society faded out into indifferent cynicism. All his extraordinary feats of oratory came to an end. Some unknown spiritual power was calling him from the lull of sleep.

Sarcastically U.G. was commenting about Theosophical Society. He said that in it, "Theos", God, was not present, "Sofia", knowledge, was zero. What remained was "Society" which had transformed itself into a "Self-Appreciation Society". To be rude, he said it indulged in spiritual masturbation.

U.G. began to criticize openly the basic tenets of the Theosophical Society pungently. Phrases such as "Universal Brotherhood", "universal equality" and "world peace" were he said, 'mere utterances of a delirious mind.'

> The Theosophical Society is a bouquet of colorful paper flowers. In course of time, the colors faded out and the bunch itself has become untidy. The internal strength, zeal, zest and enthusiasm have dried up and it has become hollow. What is the use of such a spiritual fruit?
>
> All the pioneers and bigwigs have gone into oblivion and in their place the present substitutes are wearing colorful turbans around their empty heads. Only turbans have value but not the heads. Group politics, power and money are playing their heinous roles in the administration of the Society. The atmosphere is polluted; the obsession with greed is utterly beyond belief. When elections for Presidency were conducted, the righteous Mr. Jinarajadasa could not withstand the changed scenario and withdrew from the arena.
>
> The behavior of certain persons who were credited with Arhatship became shameful. They declared themselves as the highest philosophical heads. But actually they were worse than the uncultured, uncivilized, illiterate lay people.

In 1953, Neelakantha Sri Ram was elected as the President of Theosophical Society. U.G. had been at loggerheads with him for a long time. The differences between them became exacerbated when Sri Ram was unable to answer U.G.'s torrential questions.

U.G. told Sri Ram pointblank: 'You are mediocre and are unfit for the position of the President. You don't have either the eligibility or the capability to hold the post. "Ram, Ram"[83] to you my dear Sri Ram,' and walked out.

Later he resigned from the Theosophical Society's Esoteric Section and its missionary membership. U.G. had matured and could not be contained by the Theosophical Society. The Society became too narrow and stifling for him.

There were many comments about U.G.'s resignation from the Theosophical Society. Most loyalists of the Society commented: 'He is egocentric, he argues adamantly, is

utterly stubborn and is a man of insufferable arrogance; he is hard-headed and is a self-styled intellectual. He is an imitator of Krishnaji in his gestures, gait and mien. He is a blind critic and is irresponsibly opinionated on many issues.'

U.G. had a few supporters, however. They thought of him variously as follows: 'He is a pathfinder; he is open, frank, honest and loyal to his conscious, genuine personality; he has a moral certitude; his mental horizons extended amazingly; this being so, he had no other option except quit the Theosophical Society. He is a man with a mission.'

Someone said, 'U.G. is a rolling stone which gathers no mass.' 'Thanks for the compliment. If it is true, let me gather at least a little mass of dust in my own original way. I must sing my own song and strum my own guitar,' U.G. hit back.

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Several aspirants in many parts of the world were influenced by Krishnaji in the pursuit of their respective goals. Kusuma was one among them. She was impressed by Krishnaji's exhortation that 'a woman is not a doormat and a weakling in the household.' Now she was determined to go away somewhere to live by herself independently, bringing all her dormant creative impulses to bear fruit.

One day, she informed U.G., 'I want to start a tutorial college in Eluru. I shall stay there for sometime to prove my individuality and capability. What do you think?' she said confidently.

U.G. was not surprised. They discussed the proposal at length, and he was satisfied with her concrete ideas. 'Kusuma, today, I am proud of your decision. My guidance and cooperation will always be available to you. You are my fellow traveler in our joint family- journey through life. I wish you all luck,' said U.G. on an encouraging note.

One fine day, Kusuma arrived in her birth place Poolla along with her children. After spending a few days with her parents, she proceeded to Eluru. She rented a house with the help of an acquaintance and started Bharati Tutorial College. She left her children with her parents in Poolla.

Meanwhile, a rumor spread in Eluru that a movie star started a tutorial college in their town. People began to come in droves to the college to have a glimpse of her. Later they realized that she was not a movie actress but still a beautiful personality, even more beautiful than the movie stars.

The college started on a modest note and after a week or so students thronged. She appointed several teachers. Students and their parents were impressed by her English language skills. Her efforts to live by herself bore fruit and she was relatively happy with herself. Now that she could realize her potential, her self-confidence grew. She was anxious to show off her success to her husband. Her parents and close relatives, however, did not appreciate her venture as they felt that, having come from a rich family, she had no need to making a living,

Unfortunately, she became a victim of many rumors. One rumor was that since there were irreconcilable differences between wife and husband, her husband did not permit her to accompany him to America; that then she demanded to have a divorce, to start her life afresh independently; and that he had consented to divorce her and was leaving India shortly.

Another rumor had it that her husband had asked her to choose between a diamond necklace and a trip to America and she preferred the necklace. The rumor went on to say when someone had asked 'for the sake of diamond necklace how could you leave your husband?' she answered, 'no, no, I am not a fool. I just pretended to like a necklace; but after he leaves for America, I too will follow him on my own.'

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U.G. did not give any heed to Krishnaji's advice that he should wait till December to get treatment for Vasant in America. He had been making his own efforts to leave for America for some time.

U.G. wanted to sell away the remaining fixed assets which he had in Bezawada, Gudiwada and other places and convert them into ready cash. He went to Bezawada and met his uncle Jagannadham with whom he discussed the matter. Jagannadham advised him: 'My sincere advice would be that you can dispose off everything but not the land near the movie theater. Its value is increasing by the day and shortly it would become a prime area. But the decision is yours.'

He agreed with his uncle. Then U.G. left for Gudiwada. Durgamma was delighted to see U.G. She had been spending her time singing and teaching traditional songs to the neighboring children. Venkata Subbaiah, a close friend of U.G., landed like a winged bird. U.G. was surprised by his sudden presence. 'Apparently my son had seen you on his way to the bazaar; he came running to the fields to tell me; so I'm here. Of late, we have all been thinking of you; we were told that you would be leaving for America for the medical treatment of your son,' explained Venkata Subbaiah.

Later, U.G. sought the help of Subbayya in liquidating some assets to provide for his trip. U.G. then visited *Paravidyasram*. Mallavarapu Venkata Ramanayya, who was looking after the lodge, received U.G. and explained its current activities. U.G. suggested, 'Why don't you open a school for children in a modest way?'

'We have no funds'

'I will provide the seed capital; the rest you can collect through donations. I will speak with the local gentry'.

'That would be a fine idea. Your word carries weight here.'

Before leaving the Lodge, U.G. spoke to a few servants who were working there and gave them some cash gifts.

Subbaiah came again to see U.G. 'Subbu, I'm going to Bombay. I may stay there for ten or fifteen days. Meanwhile, work out the sale of my property. I've already discussed the matter with my uncle in Bezawada. Now please give these thousand rupees to Venkata Ramanayya, as I promised him some money to start a school,' requested U.G.

'All right, I'll be on the job,' said Subbaiah leaving the scene.

U.G. saw his grandmother sitting in the corner of a room on a cot and looking gloomy. He felt sorry for her and enquired, 'What's the matter with you, *Ammamma*, is your health O.K.?' She heaved a big sigh, 'Ramudu, I am counting my days for the final journey.' Her eye operation in Madras was not successful – one of her eyes had become totally blind.

Durgamma had heard that Kusuma was living alone in Eluru running a tutorial college. She also heard rumors that there were major differences between the wife and the husband which even led to a possible divorce. She shuddered to bring the topic before U.G.; so she broached it indirectly: 'Ramudu, I have heard that Kusuma has started a college in Eluru. What's that about?'

'Yes, I encouraged her to work at some job; it would do her a world of good,' answered U.G. casually. After a pause Durgamma asked, 'Will she accompany you to America?' She thought that the journey may bring them close together.

'I think so; we're planning to go together. However, it depends on many factors. Anyway, I am working out the property matters. I came here to sell off some property to pool my resources. After pooling sufficient funds we will take off to America,' he said positively.

Durgamma was fully satisfied with his answer: 'Ramudu, it's good that somehow both of you are leaving for America. I pray to God to shower his grace upon your family.'

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Next morning, U.G. went into town, met some people and asked them to donate liberally to the school to be run by Paravidyasram. They agreed.

He then came to Bezawada and boarded a train to Bombay. At Bombay he stayed with his friend L.V. Bhave.

Krishnaji spent some time at Rajghat and also reached Bombay in February 1954. He wanted to spend about a month here. As usual, L.V. Bhave made arrangements for two lecturers of Krishnaji per week.

Krishnaji stayed with Ratanjee Morarjee in Carmichael Road. Here he had discussions with a number of intellectuals and pathfinders. In the evenings he gave talks at the J.J. School of Arts.

U.G. met Krishnaji. Krishnaji enquired about the health of Vasant and remembered Kusuma. 'Krishnaji, we're planning to go to America for the boy's treatment. It's almost decided,' reported U.G.

Krishnaji kept silent. Later, he conducted discussions. In the discussions, he was evasive in his answers to many questions raised by the audience. U.G. was becoming impatient. He wanted to thrash out all the issues once and for all. He was decided on a final break.

One evening, just a few people came to meet Krishnaji. Among them were Dhupeshwarkar, Sudhakar Dikshit, Motawani and U.G. were prominent. People sat around Krishnaji in reverence and awe. U.G. sat next to Krishnaji. Others were asking different questions and Krishnaji did not give straight answers. He was hedging. There were some arguments and counterarguments.

U.G. was exasperated and could not control himself. He shouted, 'Krishnaji, what all you say seems to me like the search of a blind man in a dark room for a black cat which is not there.' 'No,' Krishnaji shouted back thundering, 'It's there, Sir, it's there. I always speak the truth,' he yelled out and gave a tap on U.G.'s head by gazing at him with a strange inexplicable look. There was pin-drop silence. The meeting came to an end for the day.

A day before leaving for Madras, U.G. met Krishnaji privately. U.G. looked like a tired soldier involved in a long fight without much success. The spiritual chasm between both seemed unbridgeable.

'Krishnaji, for God's sake, put an end to your cavalcade of elusive answers and stop the exaggerated airs of logic; we have had enough of a cloud of spiritual dust; we are all tired of it, suffocated. Now, I want a straight answer, clear-cut, without the jugglery of mystical words. I don't know your limitations in divulging the mystery of your "state". I am asking you just one question: What's the state of being you are in? From the way you are bombarding your message, I presume you are in a particular state. What is that state? How did you attain it? Was it by *sadhana*? Or was it a psychological mutation or biological transformation? Somewhere along the line, something must have happened to you. What is that state you are speaking from?'

U.G. thus concluded his speech vehemently. Krishnaji maintained a conspicuous silence, the silence of enigma. He knotted his eyebrows, closed his eyes for a moment, opened them as if looking from a different dimension and echoed impersonally with a marked change of tone, 'There is no way for you to know that. It's impossible to make it known in any form or in any way. That's all.' His mystical looks could penetrate through a man's inner being.

These words stung U.G. at once. He retorted:

'You have categorically stated that there are no ways and means for us to know that "state". You also said it is unknowable and impenetrable. All right, what for all this unnecessary vocal energy then? I have frittered away seven long years listening to you. Well, now the veil has dropped. Hereafter, you have your own way and I have my own.

You can spend your valuable time on someone else. I am, however, grateful to you; you have shown extraordinary love and kindness towards my family. I am leaving for America shortly. Goodbye!'

So saying U.G. prepared to go. 'I wish you a happy journey, safe landing and good luck. Please extend my good wishes to Kusuma. *Au revoir*!' exclaimed Krishnaji with a beautiful smile on his face, getting up from his seat and bidding farewell to U.G.

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U.G. followed Krishnaji critically in his own way, not as a disciple of a guru but as an independent thinker. Now he was totally disillusioned and he had rebelled. He rejected Krishnaji's spiritual thinking and way of teaching. He erased him, as it were, from his psyche.

U.G. considered the seven-year period of following Krishnaji as a period under the influence of Saturn. Later, when he was with L.V. Bhave, he commented: 'Krishnaji considered himself to be a "touch-me-not" guru. He belongs to the cult which proffers everybody the teaching, "Discover the truth for yourself; you are your own guru." There is nothing special in him, but I thought there might be. I crushed his terminology into a checked hat, never to rise again, even traces of them.'

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U.G. returned from Bombay to Madras and for several reasons his trip to America was postponed. The money was not realized in time. Meanwhile, unexpectedly he was invited to speak at a Rotary Club meeting in the Connemara Hotel. For one hour, U.G. gave a dazzling talk on the Financial System of India. The organizers of the meeting were spellbound by his oratorical skills and unanimously decided to depute him as one of the delegates to participate in the International Social Welfare Conference to be held in Canada and America. This was an unexpected boon.

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One day, U.G. went to Eluru to meet his wife. When he arrived at the tutorial college Kusuma was busy teaching a class. He watched her teaching without her noticing him. After the class, he went in to see her. She was surprised to see him; she had no notice of his coming. U.G. patted her: 'Kusuma, I observed your teaching skills. I never expected that you would do so well. Your English is excellent. I'm really proud of you.' Kusuma was thrilled by his praise. Later he discussed with her his trip to Canada and America.

The next day, U.G. returned to Gudiwada to attend some business. Days rolled by. Kusuma started the tutorial college when she was emotionally disturbed and challenged by circumstances. But with U.G. being around, her mind started to waver. U.G.'s magnetism was so strong that she could not resist being close to her husband. Her successful individuality faded into the background. One day, she decided to wind up the show and return to being with her husband.

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U.G. came to Machilipatnam to verify some legal documents of his property and stayed with his cousin Narasimha Rao. On that day, when he was about to go to Gudiwada, a message came informing that his stepmother Suryakantam had died. He immediately went to his father's place. He participated in the last rites of his stepmother. On the fourth day, he went to Gudiwada, stayed there for one more day and then left for Adyar.

Family disturbances affected Bharati's and Usha's education. For some time, they went to school in Adyar and later in Eluru. Now they were back in Adyar.

There was a delay in the dealings in Gudiwada. U.G. still did not realize all the money he needed for their trip to America. He wrote letters to his cousin Narasimha Rao in Machilipatnam in this regard. Part of one of the letters is reproduced below:

> Besant Avenue,
> Adyar, Madras 20 25th April 1954
>
> My Dear Brother:
> ...
> My proposed journey to the U.S.A. stands postponed to early June. A specially chartered plane is leaving for Toronto (Canada) on the 12th June 1954, carrying a delegation to the International Conference of Social Welfare. The delegation will also go on a study tour of the States for four weeks. I have been asked to join the delegation as an officially registered delegate. As this will enable me to make useful contacts and enjoy the hospitality of Canadian and American Committees of Social Welfare for two months, I have agreed to do so.
>
> Affectionately,
> U.G. Krishnamurti

36. American El Dorado

A shattering turning point occurred in U.G.'s life in 1953: that was the "death experience" in Krishnaji's presence at Vasant Vihar. It squeezed him to the roots of his being. His spiritual quest to know the Ultimate Truth and divulge it to the entire world completely receded into the dark corners of his psyche. He came to a clear understanding of his life and was not led by unknown promises and pursuits. He moved slowly towards a philosophy of his own. Now he was free to lead his life in his own way and on his own terms.

The Theosophical Society, which launched him into the international arena, fetched him name and fame which were blown out of proportion. The association with Krishnaji for seven years and its alluring spiritual treasures burned up in the fires of its own hot passion.

At the age of fourteen, he almost decimated the Hindu tradition and fossilized cultural values. More recently, he had even lost interest in and taste for married life. He was disgusted with it and it appeared to him like dead weight. He had no calculations, no curiosity, no deep conviction and no fresh hopes. He emerged as a new personality imbued with a fresh outlook. He had no faith or belief in anything, as he thought that belief in anything was a bane of free life. He was transformed into a heretic and was thrown dangerously into life.

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The team of delegates to attend the International Social Welfare Conference in Canada and America left Madras on 12th June 1954. Strangely, due to unavoidable circumstances, U.G. could not make use of that opportunity. He decided to go to America at his own expense. He came to Gudiwada and Bezawada and sold off all his property except for a piece of land near the movie theater as advised by his uncle. The die was cast.

He deflated all rumors by deciding to take his wife along with him. He converted his cash into 90,000 American dollars at the rate of five rupees per dollar. That was a princely sum.

Bharati and Usha were admitted in the Besant High School Hostel in Adyar. Koccherlakota Subba Rao, a well–wisher of U.G.'s family was appointed the guardian for the two girls. Kusuma was terribly depressed with the idea of leaving her children in a hostel. The children too were sad to be separated from their parents. They hoped Vasant's treatment in America might not have to go on for more than six months.

U.G. and his wife left Madras along with Vasant for Bombay by train. Dr. Seshagiri Rao, Narasimha Rao, Durgamma, Venkata Subbaiah, Y.V. Rao, Dr. Kamat and other friends bid them farewell at the train station. L.A. Bhave received them at the Victoria Terminus Station in Bombay. U.G. checked into a hotel near the airport. In the evening, Bhave visited U.G. to have a chat. Naturally the topic of Krishnaji came up.

U.G. exclaimed, 'Believe me, I threw his line of thinking into a bonfire. I am freed from his spiritual booby trap.'

U.G. and family boarded an early morning Air India plane to London. They stayed in London for a few days in a hotel. In 1939 and 1949, when U.G. visited Switzerland, he was fascinated by its natural beauty; he had a strong desire to stay there for life. That memory was still green in U.G.'s mind. The family flew to Switzerland and arrived in Saanen.

Saanen is an enchanting place of divine beauty. Its seven hills with their cliffs and valleys are spread miles across. U.G. rented a chalet in the Gstaad area surrounded by the seven heavenly hills of Saanen for them to stay.

One evening, U.G. and Kusuma were sitting leisurely. Vasant was sleeping in his mother's lap. They were looking at the seraphic beauty in front of them. The sun was playing hide and seek. The sky was crystal-clear except for the slate-colored crumpled clouds passing slowly. All of a sudden, rain drops started falling on the trees like pearls on one side of them, while on the other side there was no trace of rain. Kusuma kept her gaze fixed on the valley for a long time. She was awestruck: 'What beautiful surroundings! It's unbelievable,' she exclaimed turning to U.G. 'Yes,' he agreed. They were bathed in ecstasy. The sunset in the horizon gave out a bright red light. The heavens seemingly descended below the line of the horizon. The earth had vanished and the mystery of heavenly hands was on every side. The moonlight appeared. It spread like a white linen sheet over the sky and the hillocks shone like silver marbles.

U.G. wanted to stay there for many days. Unfortunately, the climate did not suit Kusuma's sensitive body. She caught a cold and a cough; her lungs were affected. They were compelled to return to London.

At last they reached America, "the land of opportunities and the epitome of freedom". Soon after finding a moderately-priced hotel room, U.G. began to enquire about the medical facilities for the treatment of Vasant, while, at the same time, delving for his foothold as a speaker. He learned that expert treatment for polio might be found in Chicago. The peregrination of U.G. commenced with a visit to Lakeside, Ohio on a tourist bus. The bus was carrying a cross-section of different groups of people. Kusuma with her Indian style dress and makeup was a cynosure of all eyes.

They went to Saint Louis and stayed near Lake Eerie. That area was crowded with a number of tourists who spoke different tongues. People were cheerful and friendly. Some were swimming in the lake. The place had a festive air. Kusuma was captivated by the atmosphere. All of sudden, she jumped into the lake and began to swim. U.G. was a bit startled by her move.

All eyes turned towards her with surprised looks – an Indian woman draped in a silk sari was swimming in the lake like a baby. At that time, a Hollywood comedian happened to observe her in the lake and recorded the scene with his movie camera. In the evening photos were displayed.

A magician among the crowd was drawn to U.G. and spent some time with him. Another Hollywood actor introduced himself to U.G. They had a long chat. Other tourists came to know that U.G. was a speaker from India.

The Hollywood actor showed interest in U.G.'s family and took them in his Chevrolet to Chicago. Their long journey went on a pleasant note. He treated U.G.'s family as if he had known them for ages. He asked about their details and took them to the Red Path Bureau, an agency which arranged lectures. This organization selected speakers every year and arranged lectures for them: Swami Vivekananda, Annie Besant, George Arundale, Jinarajadasa, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Jawaharlal Nehru and other top-notch speakers were selected by them. U.G. showed interest in being on their list of speakers. But he learned that the speakers were fixed a year ahead. He was rather disappointed. However, the people at the agency advised him to go to Dallas and contact the universities there.

As the Hollywood actor bid good bye to U.G. and his family, unexpectedly a gaunt woman approached U.G. and enquired 'Are you an Indian? Are you interested in giving lectures?'

'Yes, indeed!'

'Then I will help you; but on one condition, that you will let me be your manager. You will give me a share of your earnings. Would you like that?

'Yes, agreed,' replied U.G. enthusiastically.

'O.K., my name is Erma Crumly. I like India and its people. I never visited your country but I read a lot of books on it. They are fascinating.'

After lunch she took them to the International Platform Association. U.G. furnished the details of his background. 'Your background is impressive; but we're afraid that your scholarship may not suit common audiences. Still, we'll give you an opportunity to make a 15-minute presentation. You can pick your own topic.' U.G. expressed his willingness. He chose to speak on "What India stands for".

Meanwhile a hefty gentleman with a walrus-like mustache approached U.G. and advised him: 'Please don't speak with a British accent. We're fed up with it. Your style of expression also shouldn't be hackneyed. Expression is the key. Normally Americans convey their thoughts more through gestures than through words. So your facial expressions should be catchy and natural; then you will be appreciated in America, good luck!'

Surprisingly, the speakers were not selected by judges. A recording machine selected them. Depending upon the echoed applauses, the speakers were graded by the machine. Thus the ranking was purely mechanical.

'Why is it like that?' Kusuma questioned inquisitively.

'Well, madam, we have to sell speakers just as they sell soaps and cosmetic creams. This method is invented to evaluate the intelligence and speaking skill of the candidates. Men may err but not the machine,' they explained.

U.G. was ushered into a semi-circular hall. It was crowded. Groups of people gathered on the four sides of the hall in a symmetrical manner. In the middle of the hall, only nine people were sitting close to the dais.

U.G. was quite confident of himself. He opened his speech slowly and gradually increased his pace. His speech glided cogently for fifteen minutes. There was pin-drop silence in the audience. After a moment, there was a thundering applause for thirty seconds. He was ranked first among the participants. Erma Crumly was astonished by his oratory and pleased with the results.

Later, U.G. rented an apartment in Chicago. On the top floor of the building lived a palmist named Julie. She worked as secretary to the world famous palmist, Cherio. She liked U.G.'s family immensely. In his leisure time, U.G. learned the rudiments of palmistry from her. He quickly mastered the art.

U.G. enquired about possible medical treatment for polio. Someone guided him to a famous hospital. U.G. and his family waded through the streets of Chicago on a cab and arrived at the hospital. A burly gentleman received them courteously. Vasant was examined. The doctors told U.G. that the case did not warrant any surgery and that it was possible to restore the function of his legs by physical therapy and exercises. 'We have treated similar cases successfully. But it is a protracted process. Perseverance is the key. The final result will be positive. We can assure you.'

U.G. enquired about the expense involved. They said: 'This is a charitable institution. We don't charge anything. Since you've come all the way from India, we will even waive incidental expenses for his treatment.'

U.G. filled in a form with relevant information. Then a stout elderly woman emerged into the lounge from one of the rooms. She was about sixty years old, with a broad and bright face. Her eyes were peaceful and kindly; gray hair hung down her shoulders. She seemed like a woman of great dignity. A silver cross hung around her neck.

'I am Mary, the head matron here. I take care of all the boys.' She enquired about the case, came to Vasant and touched his head sympathetically. A chair was brought and Vasant sat on it. She asked some questions. Vasant replied haltingly in English which he had learned at Besant school. The matron was pleased with him.

'My dear child, you are a bright boy. You'll be cured and be able to walk, even swim, dance and play basketball. Don't worry. All the boys here are nice and friendly. You can make friends with them,' she said reassuringly.

Vasant nodded his head. He was physically crippled but mentally strong. He was, however, nervous and he stirred uneasily. Having been inseparably attached to his

mother, the prospect of living away from her was beyond his tender mind. Kusuma reassured him promising regular visits. Vasant was admitted.

Under the auspices of the International Platform Association U.G. addressed several gatherings. As per the agreement, he paid her share to Erma Crumly. She arranged a schedule of speeches for U.G. for a whole year.

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After fifteen days, U.G. and Kusuma visited the hospital to find out how Vasant had been doing. To their surprise, he had fitted well into the rhythm, except that he complained of nightmares. He made several friends in the hospital who called him "Vesh".

U.G's popularity in the Silver Streak area of Chicago was enviable to anyone. All of a sudden people from all walks of life were hovering around him. They were mesmerized by his multifaceted personality. In the evening, they gathered around him and together they discussed a variety of subjects such as international politics, economics and India's non- alignment policy which was a hot topic in America. The place where they met was called the "Philosophers' Corner".

Day by day, U.G.'s circle of friends grew. Now and then, Republicans and Democratic local politicians participated in the discussion. U.G's views and ideas were radical and pungent. Professors and other intellectuals also participated. He refused to compromise on any issue and earned the sobriquet of "hard-core intellectual from India". He attacked American foreign policy rather bluntly – McCarthyism and the political machinations of John Foster Dulles, the Secretary of State. He stoutly defended India's non-alignment policy under the aegis of Jawaharlal Nehru, supported by Tito of Yugoslavia, Nasser of Egypt, Sukarno of Indonesia and Nkrumah of Ghana. Americans had limited knowledge of the culture and conditions of other countries.

U.G. asked: 'What's the difference between America's role in international politics and Chicago gangsterism? They're both the same.' He also defended Russia: 'It's a great country which has its own culture and ethos. Their contribution to world literature is unparalleled.'

He looked like an iconoclast who shattered cherished utopias and beliefs in established order. Sometimes, he appeared like a pragmatic and sane-headed man; the next time around, he was a skeptic, a cynic or a pessimist; but on the whole, he looked egotistic. They wondered who he really was. What was his authority? Where he did he get his super-abundant vitality? A paradoxical man – he could play a hero as well as a villain in the same scene with gusto. But there was no religious fervor in him, as was normally associated with Indian speakers.

John Piatras, an American Jew, was caught in the coils of U.G.'s magnetic power and high-strung personality and soon became his admirer. He attended U.G.'s lectures and discussions regularly. He would visit U.G. often. Kusuma liked him immensely and he became a family friend. Kusuma said, 'You have an Indian mind in an American body.'

Once she told to U.G., 'I would not mind offering my daughter in marriage to him. I have never come across such a fine and gentle American.'

* * * * * *

The supernatural powers that U.G. suppressed earlier now flashed again without his choice. In this scheme of things, *vak suddhi*[84] also occurred. By this power, whatever he prophesied would in fact take place. As a consequence of using it, he faced some awkward situations.

One day, U.G.'s friend Olivetti, an Italian business magnate, came to see U.G. on his way to office. Looking at him U.G. said, 'I think you have cancer,' rather casually. Olivetti was shocked: 'No, it can't be; my doctors have just assured me after several tests that I have no cancer. Why do you say that?' After he left U.G. he rushed to his panel of doctors to be rechecked. To their surprise, they found that he was indeed suffering from cancer. He came to U.G. and confirmed his reading. Later, he died of cancer.

U.G. was perplexed. How to control his automatic predictions? Thereafter, he was careful in revealing things to people. He controlled and suppressed his powers once again. They receded into the deep dark recesses of his consciousness, but were not totally dead.

* * * * * *

Kusuma was in correspondence with Krishnaji after she went to America. He was enquiring about the medical progress of Vasant. U.G. too was writing letters to Krishnaji now and then. To his letter dated 4th January 1956, Krishnaji immediately gave a reply.

"Vasanta Vihar"
4A, Greenways Road
Adyar, Madras 28.
India. 13th January 1956

My dear Krishnamurti,

Thank you very much for your letter of 4th January. I had heard that you were in America lecturing. I am so glad to have heard from you about your son that there is every possibility of his being able to walk in a few years. If you are going to Ojai, you will be able to meet Mr. Rajagopal who will be there. As you say, I hope we shall be able to meet in March in Bombay. Please give my best regards to your wife.

With best wishes,
Yours very sincerely,
Krishnamurti

The popularity of U.G. rose rapidly and he was invited to participate in the program called "Intellectual Encounters" on Television. He spoke on demand several times on different subjects. He participated on many occasions in the Voice of America radio programs. There was

an overwhelming response from the public. The renowned publishers, Philosophical Library of New York, came forward to compile and publish a collection of his talks.

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On that day, U.G. and Kusuma made their surprise visit to Vasant, carrying a heavy load of gifts. It was Vasant's birthday. The boy's spirits were lifted as he received many new clothes and candies. Later, Vasant distributed cookies among his friends. The boy had adapted himself to the environment – he was cheerful. He learned to speak English with an American accent fluently, shrugging his shoulders now and then while talking. Long hair floated around his head and there was a flush in his cheeks. Kusuma was quite satisfied with her son's progress.

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U.G. wrote frequently to his friends and relatives in India. He received a letter from Kochcharlakota Subba Rao from Adyar regarding a lawsuit pending in the High Court of Madras.

U.G.'s grandfather, Pantulu, had 600 square yards of land in Bezawada. A close acquaintance of his at that time lived on it for very many years with his oral consent. U.G. inherited the land. When he asked the occupant to vacate it, he did not comply. Subsequently, U.G. filed a lawsuit in the court through Subba Rao. After a number of years, the High Court of Madras dismissed the case against U.G. Here is what U.G. wrote to his uncle Jagannadham in this regard:

> 58, South Michigan Avenue, Chicago-5
> 23rd February 1956
>
> Sri T. Jagannadham Garu,
> Vijayawada –2
>
> My dear Uncle,
>
> I have just received a letter from Mr. K. Subba Rao of Adyar, saying that the Bezawada site appeal has been dismissed. He says that my absence from India is responsible for it. Well, whatever it is, my feeling in these matters is: "The Lord hath given it to me and the Lord hath taken it away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." I am glad in a way because I am now free to do what I have been wanting to do all these days, that is so say, I want to pass on to my children all that I have received from my grandfather, and I want to do it right away. Out of the properties which I got by the partition deed between myself and Mr. Narashima Rao, this is what I have done: A 7½-acres bit has been sold and the sale proceeds have been utilized to pay Rs. 60,000 to Mr. Narashima Rao (to equalize the share), Rs. 4,000 to clear my grandfather's debts and the balance of Rs. 10,000 to my wife as gift for purchasing a house at a later date. The Gudiwada godowns have been sold for Rs. 30,000 and the amount is in the form of Govt. Securities. I wish I could sell off the remaining bit of Bezawada site, subject to lease, and invest that also in Govt. Securities and hand over the whole lot. It may not be possible to do it now. I have with me the draft prepared by you, with the clause that my grandmother's demands have the first charge. I do not know how to register the document here...
>
> I have decided to stay on here for another year, possibly two or three years. My lecturing has been a tremendous success. They have received headlines and editorial

comments in all the leading papers. You know lecturing in America is not the unpaid labor that it is in India. Work in this country suits me very well indeed. One can be a true Brahmin (meaning one in pursuit of and realization of Brahman) here in America. It may sound very strange but that's what I am going to do till I fall dead.

I do not want to own anything. America can keep me busy all the five days in the week…as long as I choose to remain here, paying me 100 dollars for each lecture. You have no idea how many clubs there are in the U.S. Rotary alone has 70,000 clubs. Every club wants to hear me. Kiwanis, Lions, Elks, Executives and Women's clubs…and every club has extended an invitation.

It is quite a strain. I am now taking rest and I am scheduled to give a series of lectures at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, in early April. We are all moving to California for a six-month stay on the Pacific Coast to fulfill lecture engagements. We will get back to Chicago next October as my son is attending a school for handicapped children. I do not feel sorry for having brought him here and spending an enormous amount. Where in the world can he get such facilities–all of them free? The doctors have assured me that he will be all right after five or six years. My wife expects to take her M.A. Degree before I leave America next March (1957) for a brief visit to India. It wouldn't be difficult for me to educate all my children here with my own earnings. But what is the point. They have to be in India and the type of education here in America is unsuitable for Indian conditions. It will only give them a false sense of values…I wouldn't care to live in this country….

I have promised to give Philosophical Library, New York, all my radio and television talks for publication before the end of April. It was not for nothing that Mr. Jiddu Krishnamurti gave so much of his time. I am now speaking with great certitude. By the way, I have asked Mr. Subba Rao to wind up my show at Madras and pack all things to Pulla. But my library is the real headache. I do not know what to do with it. I do not read books these days; I have no use for them. I do not read anything except *Time*…to keep myself in touch with what is happening in the world. The daily newspaper has 125 pages and who reads that stuff I do not know. Well, there are papers with three to four million circulation. I do not think India can ever dream of this standard of living. (But) are people happy with all the wealth? Eighty percent of people here go to a psychiatrist. My wife is now completely disillusioned about the glamour that is America….

The weatherman threatened the worst winter in living memory. Contrary to his forecast, winter this year has been very mild. Anything around zero or one or two below zero… Strangest of all, we haven't had much snow this year….

Affectionately,
U.G. Krishnamurti

* * * * * * *

Kusuma was regularly in contact with her daughters Bharati and Usha. That day she received letters from her sister Kamala of Poona about them. Both the girls were missing their parents; and their education was disrupted for various reasons. They left Besant School in Adyar and were living with their grandmother in Poolla. Kusuma was very much disturbed with their move. She went into a spell of depression in spite of the American life.

U.G. and Kusuma toured in California for about six months. U.G. gave a number of speeches in different places on a variety of topics such as "The Lifestyle of Indians," "Indian Politics", "Indian Culture", "Indian Philosophy", Indian Economics" and "Indian Methods of Education". He had a special ability to present each topic in an analytical and lucid manner.

U.G. did not prepare for the lectures. If, during his lecture, anyone of his audience asked him to speak on a different topic, U.G. could immediately switch over to that topic. He was patiently answering a number of questions from the audience on different issues, even their silly enquires. Sometimes, the answer darted out even before the questions were completed.

Communism had been an anathema to the Americans. They could not understand India's fascination for the dictatorial regime in Russia, in view of the fact that India was the largest democratic country in the world.

U.G. was trying to erase the misconceptions, prejudices and pre-conceived notions of the American people. He was highlighting the "non-alignment" policy of India in international politics. However, most of his audiences were unconvinced. He would say:

> India is an ancient and vast country with a great civilization backed up by a rich and diversified cultural heritage. It emerged as an independent country in 1947 from the shackles of British rule under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi who was a greatest apostle of peace and a living embodiment of the philosophy of nonviolence. Many philosophies and ideals merged in her soul. It has problems of its own. It inherited dire poverty, illiteracy, economic backwardness along the way. It is slowly moving towards a better economic life. It is a process; it takes a long time to stabilize. India is a great example of "Unity in diversity".

After a successful six-month tour of California, U.G. and his wife returned to their headquarters to Chicago. That evening both of them drove to Vansant's place carrying many gifts. Vasant was pleased to see his parents. He introduced his new friends. He was attempting to stand on his own and walk.

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After some rest, once again U.G. plunged into public speaking in Elgin, in the state of Illinois. His public address was much appreciated. The chief editor of *The Elgin Daily Courier News*, James L. Adams, also attended the meeting. He published the speech of U.G. in his paper and also wrote a special editorial on it.

> James L. Adams
> **THE ELGIN DAILY COURIER – NEWS**
> **ELGIN, ILLINOIS**
>
> Dear Sir:
>
> I am enclosing both the coverage I gave on your talk and an editorial which it prompted. I also wrote the editorial.
>
> I enjoyed your speech and was happy to make your acquaintance. I am wondering just how much of this you consider "bunk". If there are errors in my coverage or if I misconstrued something, I would appreciate your criticism because I sincerely want to put in the paper what I think the person who is making the speech is trying to get across to his audience.

I trust your son's health is improving and that he will have a complete recovery from his attack of polio. I still personally believe that the world's only chance for a real peace will be found in the Prince of Peace – Jesus Christ.

May I take this time to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year?

Sincerely,
James L. Adams

The Courier

News Viewpoints...

An International Giveaway Sometimes Backfires...

Immediately following World War II and continuing down to the present, this country has spent millions of dollars in underdeveloped countries in an attempt to keep them from falling prey to the clutching hands of Russian imperialism.

Unfortunately, when the balance sheet has been drawn up it shows that this country is operating in the red and the country receiving the aid is being operated by the Reds.

The explanation for this kind of one–sided bargaining is not a simple one. While we may criticize countries for taking our money and then playing "footsies" with the Reds, who among the peoples on the earth is going to turn down financial help during a time of national distress? To refuse extended money would be going contrary to natural inclinations.

Only a few days ago a highly educated man from India – one of the countries which has received millions of American dollars and still refuses to ally herself with the Western nations – made some statements in a speech in Elgin that were freighted with truth and worthy of profound consideration.

U.G. Krishnamurti was born and has lived most of his life in India – with the exception of the months he has spent traveling and lecturing, much of it in this country.

As graduate of Madras University, he is by no means "typical" of an Indian as only seven percent of the country's populace is literate. But as one who has traveled throughout his country and lectured at practically every college and university in that vast land, he should be able to reflect some of India's present psychology.
Krishnamurti points out that this country would be better off if she would stop spending money in India and utilize it in other directions. The masses of India – who are in the main ignorant of America's financial help to their country – would appreciate our position more if money were spent on such projects as bringing Indian patients to this country for treatment in American hospitals, and by American doctors; sponsoring Indian farmers who could get a first hand view of an American farm, or letting an Indian industrial worker see our assembly lines in action and visit the home of an American worker.

While Krishnamurti does not decry the student exchange program, he wisely points out that the Indian student is rather far removed from the common people. University

graduates don't speak the language of the man in crowded streets of Bombay.

The reducing of tension among the nations of the world will not be solved overnight. If "understanding" among the various peoples is to come about, however, it will be when they become better acquainted by person-to-person contact and not through an international give away program which too often has repelled rather than attracted those whom we were sincerely trying to help.

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U.G. speech in the Lions Club, given a little later, was a special attraction in the daily newspapers.

Lions Club Hears Lecture of India

Speaking at Lions Club here Tuesday, U.G. Krishnamurti, one of India's most accomplished lecturers, pleaded for greater understanding between India and America.

After thanking the Club for the invitation, Krishnamurti paid an eloquent tribute to the Lions International for the very valuable work it is doing here in this country and elsewhere, and added that such movements could be the greatest forces in a world which is full of misunderstanding, acrimony, discord and prejudice.

Adverting to India's place in world diplomacy, Krishnamurti said: To call Nehru a fellow-traveler with "Krush and Bulge" or "Mao and Chou" is a cheap device. Nehru is the most glamorous personality in world politics today. His experiment in India to work out a greater stability and equilibrium and integration in the individual is setting a great pattern for the future.

Referring to the foreign aid, he said that the country's prosperity could not depend upon foreign aid alone. "To share your industrial and scientific experience with India is one thing but how far the nation can use it is a different thing. I always maintain that the prosperity of a country can only be dependent upon its own inherent strength. Economic recovery and industrialization are possible, Krishnamurti said, only through one process, that is, collaboration between people and the Government. I am not sure that exists in India and somehow people haven't that enthusiasm for all these first and second five years plans."

Concluding his address, Krishnamurti sounded a note of hope. "It is said," he went on to say, "that America is chosen as guardian of the freedoms of the world. My prayer is that this grand land of freedom can fulfill her mission."

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On another platform U.G. spoke about "The Prime Minister of India, Nehru's political views". He said:

Nehru was born at critical times in the history of India and grew up as a great personality. For many years, Indians experienced the rule of colonialism.

The National Movement for Independence and establishment of individuality and creativity in the Indians as a nation had a tremendous impact on Nehru. India had to

face gigantic problems and they were complex. Therefore, the Prime Minister had to find out ways and means for reconstruction of the country in a Socialistic Pattern, as against imperialism. He was shouldering the heavy responsibilities of a unique political outlook and path for independent India.

The attitude of Nehru towards other countries was also a complex one. It was influenced by different social and political ideologies.

U.G. said:

Nehru is a charismatic and noble person. He is imaginative as well as pragmatic. He is not only an ideologist, but also a practiser – he implemented whatever he preached.

It is a fact that there are some conflicts in his personality. They are formed under the influence of his special surroundings. He had a definite objective and goal to achieve. His influence is not limited to India alone. He wishes for the welfare of the entire world. He is a peacemaker.

The principle of balance of power is unavoidable in the political arena. One country or a group of countries should not alone become powerful. There should be a balance of power. The underdeveloped and developing nations are crushed by powerful countries and consequently, they are not able to achieve internal progress. Under the financial pressure of another country and governed by the conditions of such countries it is not possible to have internal progress for any country.

Thus, Nehru laid foundations for a third power in the world politics. It is an inevitable situation. India, other Asian countries and African countries came together in the Bandung Conference. Nehru played a pivotal role in the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries at Baghdad and Cairo. He is working hard to bring Asian and African countries together.

U.G. continued to speak about the foreign policy of Nehru:

The foreign policy is subjected to misunderstandings in India and abroad. But if the conditions in the world are overviewed critically we cannot find fault with the ambitions and policies of Nehru, because he has a great responsibility to formulate a definite and faultless foreign policy overcoming the initial hurdles and perils of independent India. Nehru gave due importance to economic, scientific and technological progress of India. At the same time, he had a strong desire to fight out blind beliefs, dogmatic customs and other narrow views in modern India.

U.G. added:

Nehru wishes to usher in a new society, where it gives place for freedom, economic equality and social justice. That is why he strongly believes that science and technology alone can take the country forward. His ambition is that the world should develop such a situation where there is no place for hatred between countries and where it is free from war fear.

Referring to the relationship between Nehru and Gandhi, U.G. said:

Nehru compared himself to Plato and compared Gandhi to Socrates. He had a great

respect and reverence for Gandhi, but he differed from him on different issues. The religious attitude of Gandhi towards politics was opposed by Nehru.

U.G. concluded his speech saying:

> The public of America have a great liking for Nehru. In this connection, I wish to point out that the eminent senators like Cabot Lodge are supporting the foreign policy of Nehru.
>
> * * * * * * *

Wherever he spoke, U.G. upheld the policies of the Prime Minister of India, Nehru, and he regarded himself as the unofficial Ambassador of India to America. His successful projection of his country was heard back in India.

After a few days, U.G. addressed a public meeting organized by the Rotary Club of Muskegon City. The local periodical published his speech on 25th September 1956.

Before Throngs Here
Man of India Appeals for understanding

U.G. Krishnamurti of India in talks before Community College students and the Rotary Club today said "whatever you may think of India's Prime Minister Nehru's role in world diplomacy and whatever his eventual place in history, America can ill afford to let go of his peace-bringing possibilities."

Referring to the suspicion on the part of some Americans that Nehru must be gullible to world communism, Mr. Krishnamurti said India cannot afford to take any other line than active neutrality.

"Some Americans think that a leader who wants to keep his country actively neutral as between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. must be gullible to world communism," Mr. Krishnamurti said. "But India cannot afford to take any other line which will bring her directly in conflict with a first rate power."

He said, however, that America and India stand for realization of more or less the same ideals, "but there is a fundamental difference in the means of realizing the objective."

"I have no doubt that ultimately the moral factors, the feeling that similar ideals animate both countries will unite us."

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Kusuma had successfully passed her B.A. in Literature as a private candidate in Madras University. U.G. had been persuading her to continue her studies. She was quiet reluctant; yet she joined a college to study M.A. in Sanskrit. She slowly got the taste of the subject and became seriously involved in her studies.

Kusuma continued to write letters to Krishnaji, informing him about their welfare and conditions in America. Krishnaji was replying encouraging her and expressing his ardent hope that the boy would regain his normal health soon.

'Vasanta Vihar'
4A, Greenways Road
Madras 28. India
11th December '56

Dear Mrs. Krishnamurti,

Thanks you very much for your letter of Nov.14th. It is very good of you to have written at some length about your family and I am very glad that your son is so very much better and I hope before he comes back, he will have completely recovered and will be able to use his legs.

I am very glad indeed that the two interviews that you had have been of some help. I do not know when I shall be coming to America and when it will be possible for us to meet. I hope everything will be well with you both and your son.

With best wishes,

Yours affectionately,
Krishnamurti

U.G. continued his lecturing spree on many platform on various subjects such as "The Impact of American Thought upon India", "India – America, Where the Twain shall Meet?", "India's Role in World Diplomacy", "India – Past, Present, Future", "Gandhi – the Living Truth", "Education for Freedom", "What Does India Stand For?" and "Has Life Any Significance". He was regarded as "one of the most brilliant speakers that India has ever produced."

Whenever U.G. addressed an audience, he would answer questions for about 45 minutes. Some of the questions were either irrelevant or silly. Very few Americans possessed a correct understanding of India.

Grey-haired ladies who sat in the audience with knitting needles in their hands and laces in their laps attended the meetings as a pastime and asked questions like, 'Do rose flowers have souls?' and 'They say that some ladies in India have five husbands, is it true?' One day, a lady asked U.G., 'Is it necessary to eat only vegetarian food for spiritual progress?' U.G. replied rather pungently, 'There's no need. You can eat your neighbor's newborn baby's tongue and yet gain spiritual realization.'

The woman was baffled by his unacceptable answer and commented, 'Are you paid a hundred dollars to give such blasphemous replies?'

Immediately U.G. bluntly retorted, 'You can have your money back. But what I told you is an absolute fact.'

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Two men followed U.G. wherever he went to address a gathering, and sat in the audience. U.G. guessed that they were not attending the lectures to benefit from them.

He knew that they were F.B.I. agents. One day, he directly accosted them and said to them, 'Well, gentlemen! I know who you are. Only when a black man goes to the white house as the President will I believe that America is a truly democratic country with freedom of choice.' So saying, he smiled at them. In response, they too smiled and left.

U.G. had a special attraction for the American youth, particularly teenagers. They were curious about India and its diverse background, especially its ancient temples, spiritual pursuits and festivals. Living in an opulent society, they could not come to terms with their lives. They longed for something; yet they did not know what they were missing. Some of them talked about their problems with U.G. Why had their lives become shallow? Why were they so insecure psychologically? U.G. took special care of such social dropouts.

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There were some nutrition scientists in U.G.'s friends' circle, and occasionally they used to discuss about vitamins and the nutritional value of foods. One day, they talked about the principles of health. U.G.'s food intake was frugal; he ate like a bird. And he was not fond of fruit juices. Coffee with cream was his staple and cream was his favorite dish. If the cream was very thick he was all the happier to eat it. One nutrition scientist commented, 'U.G., you're our close friend and we're all your well–wishers; why do you consume so much heavy cream? It develops problems of serum cholesterol. In the long run, it's detrimental to your health. Please stop eating double cream.'

U.G. countered:

'I'm not concerned about others, but cream will not harm me at all. My body needs it. Fat eats fat. I'm happy if I have energy. Thermal energy is sufficient for the survival of man and for the functioning of the heart, for respiration, for biological processes and for daily activities. The rest of the food is unnecessary. It's only a habit. Eating is a pleasure movement like any other pleasure activity, as for example, sex. So it doesn't matter in what form the necessary energy is provided to the body. All your theories as well as experiments are a waste of time.'

He continued, 'Whoever thinks the least of the body enjoy the best of health. People are constantly ill because of the thought and attention they put on health. Forget about the body; it knows every trick about how to survive. So think of it as little as possible.' The scientists, however, did not agree with U.G.'s opinions.

The mayor of Chicago was one of U.G.'s the friends. He had a great fascination and respect for U.G. Once, a number of local politicians and important citizens assembled in his house. U.G. was also there as a special invitee. They discussed many matters. As usual they were impressed by U.G.'s candid opinions. All of sudden, one politician suggested, 'U.G., why don't you settle down in America with your all family members? We'd love to be associated with you.' U.G. smiled and did not answer.

'If you give your consent, we can get you the necessary green cards within a short time. We can move things for you,' the gentleman repeated.

'Well, I don't have such an idea at all.'

'No, think about it seriously, U.G.; we'll be very happy if a versatile genius like you lives among us,' he echoed again.

'I am grateful, indeed, for your goodwill. My mission is different. I never aspired for any position or craved for power. I don't know where I would settle, but I like absolute freedom to live on my own terms. I am like a free bird; that's my mode of existence. I thank you very much.'

37. Signs of Things to Come

The palmist Julie, who lived on the top floor, visited U.G. often. She liked to taste Indian cuisine. One day, when U.G. and Kusuma were talking, she stepped in.

'Hope, I'm not disturbing you, U.G.'

After she had some snacks and coffee, Kusuma extended her palm towards her and enquired out of curiosity: 'What I am up to? What will my future be like?'

Julie studied the lines of her palm closely. She looked at Kusuma's life-line and said, 'Well, Kusuma, by nature you have a creative tendency. You are tender at heart. You are very possessive and are dominated by emotions. You want to live on your own terms. You are inclined to spend more of your time in a dream world rather than in the real world. You have a great passion for life. Had you pursued music or poetry you could have earned a big name and fame for yourself. Your self-respect is undaunted. Your life will not be smooth as you hope it to be; your fate line changes rapidly. You require perseverance to face unpleasant events. You are a good conversationalist. You will face unexpected twists and turns in life. If you accept the challenges boldly, you will succeed in your pursuits.' Julie stopped and gazed at Kusuma with sadness and slowly lapsed into silence. After some time, she gained confidence and asked Kusuma out of curiosity, 'How many children do you have?'

Kusuma replied, 'Three,' riveting her eyes on Julie. 'Then, splendid, there is an indication of a fourth one. Best of luck! May the Lord's blessings descend on you!' Kusuma's face beamed with a pretty smile and she blushed slightly at the mention of motherhood. She inhaled the cold air with delight. There was an expression of joy in her face.

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One day, Julie invited U.G. to her apartment. She served him coffee with double cream. 'Well, U.G., I want to say something important about your life. That's why I have invited you today.' U.G. kept quiet. She went on:

> Since I have studied both your palms, I'd like to reveal something regarding your wife's longevity. I'm extremely sorry to say that your wife's lifespan is short. Her fate line is rather worrying, with a number of cuts and detours, and the supporting life-lines are alarmingly weak. We don't know what will be the divine plan, but unless some miracle happens, she may not survive for more than four or five years. This is my stark observation; I'm so sorry. She will not die of any disease; her life would be cut short all of a sudden under strange circumstances.

U.G. patiently heard the news without any apparent emotion. Julie took U.G.'s palm into her hand and observed it keenly. Shrugging her shoulders she continued:

> Your hand is puzzling to me. I haven't come across this type of strange configuration so far and perhaps never will. It defies the science of palmistry. One brutal fact embedded in it is that there is no scope for any great change in your life till your wife is out of the way. Then perhaps major events will occur causing a radical change in your ongoing life pattern. A mystery will always

> shroud your life. You'll face monumental contretemps and conflicts. You'll enter a bubbling cauldron of tormenting situations. Your life is not under your control. You give more credence to your mind than to your heart. The depths of your nature are unknown to anyone. No one can look inside you. How you appear to others is different from what you actually are. Your life is full of mutations. It will not travel in smooth curves. There will be disconcerting zigzags, disruptions, inexplicable shifts and sudden lapses as also forays in unexpected directions. Challenges will be many in your life. Yet the Unseen Hand will always help you from unexpected quarters. The ship of your life sails alone in the ocean of infinity facing several cyclones and typhoons.

'The ship takes its own time to reach the shore. After reaching the shore, you will not be as you are now.' U.G. responded with a sublime indifference to her prediction. As Malcolm Muggeridge observes, 'In all the larger shaping of a life, there is a plan already, into which one has no choice but to fit.'

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After a roaring success which lasted three years, U.G. decided to discontinue his lecturing spree. His tryst as a speaker ended. 'Madame, this is my last talk. I'm not going to do this kind of work anymore. For every job there is a beginning and an end. I am putting a full stop to my talks,' U.G. announced to Erma Crumly.

'What, you are discontinuing your speeches! U.G., how could you? This is a decent and lucrative job. You're now in great demand. You can't do this,' said Erma on a shocking note.

'I'm sorry, Erma, I never craved for money. It was only a temporary occupation to give vent to my feelings, that's all,' he replied.

'No, U.G. you are a reputed speaker in America. I received several letters requesting me to arrange your talks. You can go on for at least three or four years with this schedule. I can't understand your mind; I'm puzzled,' she tried to persuade him. U.G. kept quiet. It was not easy to convince her about this drastic turn of events.

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38. Kusuma's Disillusionment

Vasant's polio was almost cured; he was able to walk but with slight jerky movements. U.G. and his wife brought him home from the hospital for the first time. Vasant was completely Americanized; the way he talked, his gestures and behavior patterns had all changed. U.G.'s friends were happy to know that the boy was able to stand on his own legs. At last, U.G.'s mission was fulfilled.

Now U.G. was spending his time idling away. He seemed to enjoy this mode of living. He would walk along the streets of Chicago like a tourist, observing the busy traffic and people's hectic pace of life. He appreciated the meticulously arranged wares in the shop windows. Eating pizza at the eating joints and watching the traffic had become his hobbies.

One day, U.G. handed over $3,000 to his wife and said, 'Kusuma, this is all the money I have with me. Hereafter, you somehow manage the show yourself.'

Kusuma was stunned. 'What? How can I run the show? I don't know anything in this alien land; how can I take care of the family?' she said timidly.

'Come on, Kusuma, don't be so discouraged. We'll try to get a job for you.'

'Me? A job?'

'Yes, you must prove to yourself that you can earn some dollars and carry on the family responsibilities. Once you get the taste of earning money you will really enjoy the job,' U.G. said trying to persuade her.

Kusuma did not respond, but eventually U.G. prevailed over her.

He was on a search for a job for his wife. He enquired in a number of places and talked to several friends. He came to know that there were some vacancies in the *World Book Encyclopedia* office; but he also learned that about 600 people had applied for those jobs. He got an appointment with the project manager and talked for about half an hour with him. The manager was very much pleased with the scholarship and expounding abilities of U.G.'s wife He immediately created a position of "Research-Assistant" and appointed Kusuma in it on the same day.

The job involved researching all sorts of odd and unknown but interesting information about rural games, native festivals, indigenous dances and tribal art forms from the four corners of the world, as well as gathering information about sports and pastimes. For example, Kusuma was asked to find information on rural games such as *Jilli-Danda*[85] in India, information about how many players play the game, how the game is played, what the rules of the game are, and so on.

In an attempt to gather answers to such queer questions U.G. visited a number of libraries in Chicago. In fact, U.G. had to work harder than Kusuma. For the first time

in her life in the U.S., Kusuma began to earn dollars and the taste of hard-earned dollars boosted her spirits. Time rolled on. Things went smoothly except for a strange turn of events.

When Kusuma went to her office dressed in colorful silk saris and jewelry with meticulous make up, the other employees in the office would continuously stare at her. She frequently became the talk of the office. The manger observed that work in the office suffered as a consequence. One day, he came to Kusuma's cubicle and said, 'Madame, many of the staff members here are wasting their time admiring your dress and make up. Would you please come to the office wearing a Western dress from now on?'

U.G. had no objection to such a change of dress, but Kusuma was vehemently opposed to the idea. She refused, asserting emphatically, 'That's partial nudity, if you ask me. I won't give up my traditional dress.' The request of the manager fell flat on her ears. Another day, the manager insisted that she should wear Western dress. She refused again. Then she was asked to resign her job. 'By all means,' she said, resigned her job and walked out. U.G. respected her decision.

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Days and months rolled on. Their financial position deteriorated by the day. U.G. was never frugal in spending. He never borrowed money from anyone in his whole life except once when he was in dire need and had to borrow from his cousin Narasimha Rao in Madras; but he returned the money in two days. His influential friends in America would gladly support him, if only he asked. But he wouldn't go to them for help.

Kusuma's savings were all spent. The silverware was gone. Whenever there was a need, U.G. pawned his wife's gold ornaments. Even under such pressure for money, U.G. did not think of giving talks again. Strangely, he never approached the Philosophical Library of New York for the publication of his radio and television talks to earn some income. He gave cooking lessons in his house teaching vegetarian cooking.

Kusuma was mentally depressed by this turn of events. Slowly, the financial worries got to her. But U.G. never felt insecure; he was always cheerful and untouched by the present condition. Somehow he was quite confident of himself.

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39. A One-Night Stand

While U.G. was still giving lectures in America, an American girl by name Linda attended his talks regularly. She was in fact more fascinated by the speaker than his speech. The fascination turned into an infatuation. U.G. reminded her of the great American singer Elvis Prestley. After U.G. had finished his lecture, she would meet him in cafés and other places and lavish money on him. U.G could not understand why she was so taken by him. He, in his turn, had not developed any special attachment for her. He considered her merely as a friend. Linda came from a wealthy Jewish family in Chicago.

She was in her late thirties, slim and of medium height. She had an aquiline nose, a baby face which revealed a child at heart, a pair of animated eyes, auburn hair, and a somewhat chiseled body. Although she was not very beautiful, she was stunningly attractive. One evening, a friend of U.G.'s invited him to his house. Linda was also present there. The two talked late into the night. U.G. yawned several times. When U.G. was about to go home on a cab, Linda softly cooed, 'Well, U.G., at this late hour why do you want to go to your home? Why don't you come to my house, spend the night there and go in the morning?' U.G. was tired and wanted to sleep soon. 'Well, OK,' he said causally.

The two of them traveled in her car to a posh locality in Chicago. She parked her car and they both went upstairs in an elevator. Linda opened her door and invited U.G. in. At a glance U.G. noticed that the room had a rich ambience. The house was furnished in great taste in antique style which gave it a feel of harmony and coziness. U.G. settled comfortably into a sofa browsing some fashion magazines.

Linda went into the Kitchen and prepared a quick vegetarian meal for both of them. They had a leisurely dinner and watched television for a little while. Later Linda led U.G. into her bedroom. The room smelled of lavender and roses. Opposite her bed Titian's famous painting *Venus of Urbino* and a painting of Coubert were mounted on the wall. Both were paintings of nudes.

There was no one else in the house. It was past midnight. Linda changed into a negligée. She sat on the bed close to U.G. All of a sudden, erotic feelings erupted in him. He felt an irresistible urge. He tried in vain to control it.

When U.G. himself started making advances at her, Linda was thrilled. She was so out of breath that she could hardly speak; she mumbled something. She wholeheartedly surrendered herself to him. The lights were turned off. Later, Linda slipped fast into a blissful sleep. U.G. could not sleep immediately though he was very tired. But his passion had now completely cooled off.

He thought to himself, 'What have I done to-day? I was never tempted before by anyone. How could I lose control of myself today? Why is sexual urge so powerful?' U.G. knew that the sexual instinct is a natural phenomenon of the body. Still he could not gauge why he so tamely surrendered himself to it that day.

U.G. kept no secrets from his wife. And they had an unbridled sexual experiences and blissful movements in their own married life. Kusuma, however, considered that the love between a wife and a husband is a strong, sacred bond. U.G. believed that there is nothing to love except mere physical attraction. Once she jocularly remarked, 'You need a sexual partner not a wife.' Several times Kusuma broached the subject: 'You are such a handsome man and a good speaker; you must have interacted with a number of women in this country. Are you not attracted to them? Did you restrain yourself for fear of betraying your wife?'

'No, not that. If I had gone astray, my life would have been totally different, even if you have no objection. I have my own reservations and restrictions. I don't want to make use of others for my selfish ends and happiness. It's totally against my principles. That's all.'

Once, in India, U.G. and Kusuma were making love in the bed. Just as he was about to have an orgasm, their daughter, Bharati, started to cry in the cradle. Immediately, Kusuma got out of the bed to take care of the infant. U.G. became extremely angry with frustration. For a moment he felt like strangling his daughter, but restrained himself. He asked himself, 'What sort of a spiritual man am I?'

U.G. recalled that experience and began to think again about the present incident with Linda. To be sure she was enamored by him. She willingly surrendered herself to him. But what happened to his discretion? It wasn't that U.G. considered it a lapse of morality or a break of a vow. He did not think he betrayed his wife, nor did he worry about the rights and wrongs of his act. He thought to himself, 'To this day I have not used anyone for my selfish ends. But today I have exploited that girl for my pleasure. Is that not self-deceit?' He had a flash of disillusionment. This tiny incident, a single experience with another woman, brought a new change in him, a transformation. Sexual urge had totally disappeared from U.G.'s system and never came back.

U.G. left Linda's place the next morning. He narrated the whole story to his wife without suppressing any detail. It was not his nature to keep secrets from his wife. He confessed, 'I'm sorry, Kusuma, my sexual life has come to an end. From now on, there won't be any sexual relationship with you either.' Kusuma remained silent. At that time, she was pregnant. One thing she could not understand: 'Why such a drastic action for such a trivial act?'

U.G. spent a number of nights alone with Linda. He wanted to test himself. His sexual desire did not come up again. It was totally decimated from his psyche. U.G. tried in a number of ways to keep Linda away from him, but did not succeed. She followed him like a shadow. She could not understand him even after he explained the change in him and his new stand. U.G. did not want to hurt her feelings. So he remained patient. But her infatuation and adoration for him were unabated. She met him often and took him to expensive restaurants. One day, she tried to present him with a Vicuna coat, costing about a thousand dollars. 'Look, Linda, just imagine how that coat looks on my present dress. I'll look like a scarecrow,' said U.G. turning down her gift. But she

persisted in trying to give him a gift; at last, he finally accepted a Kashmir shawl from her.

Linda continued to try to entice and attract him in a number of ways. Once she offered her entire property to him in return for marrying her. 'Why is this crazy woman so persistent? Doesn't she know that I'm already married? How could she possibly think that I will desert my wife?'

U.G. considered her wish amusing and he wanted to tease her. 'You will give me any amount of money?'

'Yes, definitely. State the amount,' she said confidently.

'I want the money right now; could you give it to me?

'Right now?'

'Yes, at this very moment.'

Linda thought for a moment and said 'OK, out of the five million dollars that are with me, I'll give you three million and the remaining amount, I'll donate to the Cancer Institute.'

'Why do you want to donate to the Cancer Institute?'

Linda did not reply immediately. She was crestfallen; the expression on her face changed. The woman that till then had been cheerful suddenly became grim and dull. Something choked her voice. Shrugging her shoulders, she said, 'Well, U.G., I haven't told you this yet. I'm a cancer patient. I know I may not live long. At one time you attracted me and I became enamored of you. My infatuation for you became an obsession. I know you are a married person and am also aware that Indians value marriage as a sacred institution. Strangely, your presence makes me forget all my pains and problems. I want to be with you all the time. I feel protected in your presence. I'm ready to die in your arms. I'm in a helpless situation.'

U.G. was shocked. A feeling of sympathy flowered through his heart. What a tragedy! 'I'm so sorry Linda, but I don't need your money. I was just teasing you. I can't do much except express my sympathy. Be a sensible girl and don't entertain any romantic notions or desires about me. Put an end to your fantasies. They won't be realized. For God's sake, forget all this and live your life peacefully,' U.G. tried to persuade her. She cast down her eyes on the ground as though she was escaping the realities. But U.G.'s words did not have any effect on her. Finally, one day, she approached Kusuma.

Kusuma received her graciously. Linda revealed everything to her. In the end she concluded, 'I am very much absorbed by his presence. I feel so safe, incredibly secure. He has such an irresistible personality.' Kusuma broke into a merry laugh as if a little lad was asking his mother for the moon over the sky. She exclaimed, 'Well, Linda, he told me about you. You're living in a dream world. First you must come out of its spell.

I've known him for fourteen years. Believe me, till now I haven't been able to possess him. How could *you* hope to do it? You can't win him over by tempting him with money or beauty. Please don't run after a mirage and ruin your life. Go back to your place and live happily and forget about him completely.'

Linda left utterly disappointed and disheartened. No one knows if Linda ever became free from her obsession with U.G.

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40. A Friend in Need

On that day, there was a heavy snowfall in Chicago. The temperature was below four degrees. As usual, U.G. started on his morning walk, wearing a long coat, gloves and a cap, with his hands in his coat pockets. After walking a short distance, he realized that he had missed his regular route. He was surprised, 'How could it happen? Why didn't I catch myself taking the wrong turn?' Snow was falling continuously in spongy white cotton-like lumps. It was gathering on top of trees and buildings. The road was foggy and not clear. U.G. ambled through the snow-covered street. Yonder, in front of a massive building, an old man stood, anxiously awaiting someone. He looked like he was searching for someone. The street was quiet and there was no one else around. He could see vaguely that a person was walking towards him slowly. U.G. was pacing leisurely on the snow-sodden road like a solitary ship sailing on a great ocean.

U.G. approached the building. The old gentleman gathered all his energy into his eyes like an Argus-eyed man and examined U.G. U.G. looked at the old gentleman casually and was about to pass him when the old gentleman enquired, 'Are you an Indian?' U.G., surprised by the question, replied 'Yes, I am.' The man appeared to be delighted with the reply and his face was aglow. U.G. was rather surprised. Who was he? Why was he waiting at the gate, exposing himself to the cold? U.G. looked at the building in front of him. It was the headquarters of the Theosophical Society.

The stranger spoke softly to U.G. 'Will you kindly step inside?' U.G. was a bit startled at the invitation. Why did he invite him? He mused, "If the man had known me earlier, would he have invited me like this?" U.G. severed his connections with the Theosophical Society years ago. Would it be appropriate for him to enter the Theosophical building now? U.G. hesitated to step in. As if he understood the reason for U.G.'s hesitation, the man suggested again, 'For some reason you seem to hesitate to come in. But I'm not asking you to come into the main building. That lone room adjacent to it is my residence. You can come in there without any hesitation.' U.G. followed him to that room.

Looking around, U.G. could see the photos of Madame Blavatsky, Colonel Alcott, Annie Besant and others mounted on the walls. The room was kept tidy and things were in their proper places. There was an indefinable peace pervading the room. The man asked U.G. to sit comfortably near the hearth and began preparing coffee for him.

U.G. carefully observed the man. He was about 80-plus-years-old, a hefty and tall figure. He seemed as ancient as a bone on the beach. His skin was wrinkled; his curly hair was snow-white and scraped back into a bunch above his nape like a tendril, exposing his broad forehead. The contours of his being crystallized themselves in the crucible of experience. He had a big mouth, a strong short chin and his arched nose beam was sturdy. His glittering eyes were like embers of a glowing fire. His total demeanor was akin to that of a Roman warrior leisurely resting after several victorious battles.

He brought some hot coffee and gave a cup of it to U.G. keeping another for himself. They sat quietly sipping the coffee.

'Well, let me introduce myself to you. My name is Marshall Dixon. I am a retired Auditor General. The Governor of Illinois is my brother. I devoted my entire life to the Theosophical Society. I moved closely with Annie Besant, Jinarajadasa and other eminent Theosophists. In 1953, Jinarajadasa breathed his last here and I attended his funeral. I stayed in Adyar, Madras for some time. Now I am spending my last days here keeping myself busy with the activities of the Society.'

U.G. also introduced himself to Dixon. He told him about his involvement with the Theosophical Society. He explained about his present stay in America, about the reasons for his arrival in America with his family and about his talks in different places. Dixon was very much pleased with U.G. He could gauge U.G.'s spiritual depth. Now, it was clear to Dixon beyond doubt that he was directed to meet this fascinating person. He felt satisfied.

After a long pause, Dixon revealed, 'Well, meditation is part of my daily routine. Some strange thing happened last evening while I was in deep meditation. For the first time, my Guru appeared before me and spoke to me. He said, "Tomorrow, in the morning, you will meet an Indian. He is in dire financial need. Support him with financial assistance as much as you can." He said this and then disappeared. Well, this is the first time for me to have such an experience. That's the reason why I stood for half an hour outside in the biting cold waiting for you. I saw you coming this way and I can see that my Guru's prophesy has come true.'

'I have not revealed you who my Master is. Have I?' so saying Dixon closed his eyes for a few moments and then looked at U.G. gently. U.G. listened to Dixon with rapt attention and answered, 'No, I would be very interested to know.'

'My Guru's name is Master Kuthumi.'

By hearing that U.G. felt as if he had an electric current passed through him. He was flabbergasted. Everything came to a standstill. All his thoughts were frozen for a moment. It was incredible, indeed!

Many years ago, when U.G. was still deeply involved in the Theosophical esoteric philosophy, one day, Master Kuthumi appeared before him and walked with him hand in hand on the Adyar beach and talked to him at length. At one point U.G. thought that the Master was operating through him for higher ends. After his shattering death experience in front of Krishnaji in 1953, U.G. disowned and discarded all those esoteric aspects of Theosophy.

At that time U.G. concluded that all those experiences were thought-induced hallucinations of some sort. The mind can invent many such mind-boggling experiences. Those masters have no existence outside of the "thought sphere". But what is the mind? Where is it actually located? What is thought? From where do thoughts come? The crux of the problem remained unsolved. That's where U.G. left off the issue.

But now such experiences had occurred to another person. Was it a coincidence or an evitable event? U.G. had various interpretations of Dixon's experience.

'You look so awe-struck! Behind every design there is a divine hand. The divine designs are impenetrable,' Dixon exclaimed as if he could read U.G.'s puzzled mind.

After a brief pause Dixon spoke again: 'well, every month I get a pension of $500. Out of it, I give $200 to my daughter. From now on, I will give you $200 a month as a gift. This pleases me; also, I would be honoring my Master's instructions.'

U.G. was surprised at this gesture and gazed at Dixon in wonder for a few moments. He expressed his profound gratitude to Dixon for his selfless compassion, concern and affection, and went home by cutting short his walk. This present experience was indeed a strange happening. When he narrated the whole episode to Kusuma, she was amazed at this unusual turn of events.

U.G. met Dixon on the next day again. They had a long tête-à-tête. Three days later, Dixon gave him $200.

After that, U.G. met Dixon whenever he could and spent time with him. U.G. received $200 from him regularly in the first week of every month.

Later some Theosophical Society people came to know that Dixon was giving money to U.G. They tried to dissuade him from helping a man who was a bête noire of the Theosophical philosophy, but in vain.

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One morning, U.G. had a mild headache and within a few minutes it became so severe that both temples throbbed with acute pain. Normally he would have taken Aspirin with some coffee. But U.G. always liked to indulge in experiments with his life. This time, he did not want to take any medication. He decided, instead, to face the pain, be face to face with it. Slowly the pain became more severe and unbearable. Kusuma begged him, 'Please take a tablet for relief. I will get you some coffee.' But U.G. refused. He wanted to test himself. The pain grew to mighty proportions. In spite of it, U.G. did not budge. He was determined to see the end of the pain. The growing pain spread all over his body. His hands and legs began to shake and he was unable to sit steadily. He stood up and tried to stride this way and that way in the room. He took deep breaths.

Kusuma trembled with fear. U.G. paid no heed to her advice in spite of his spasmodic pain. Kusuma started to cry. U.G. felt dizzy; his whole body was shaking. He could neither sit nor stand. Still, he was adamant. Ultimately, his body could not withstand the pain: he fell unconscious on the bed.

Kusuma collapsed; she began to cry aloud, followed by Vasant. She did not know whom to approach for assistance; she was in a state of total disarray. Hearing her cries, neighbors rushed in; someone called in an ambulance. U.G. lay flat on the bed in an unconscious state. However, his respiration was visibly normal. One gentleman

sprinkled cold water on his face and tried to wake him up. But U.G. continued to be unconscious. Someone else massaged his soles and toes. By that time, the ambulance had arrived. He was immediately moved to hospital. The doctors thought it was migraine and gave him some injections. After half an hour, perhaps as a result of the injected drug, he became conscious. Meanwhile the news spread and U.G.'s friends gathered in his house. Kusuma and Vasant were informed that all was well and there was no need to worry. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

U.G. felt very weak. By the evening he became normal and returned home.

From this traumatic incident U.G. learned an important truth: when the body cannot withstand intense pain it becomes unconscious in order to protect itself. That is its way of surviving. The human body is one of nature's finest creations. It is a well-equipped laboratory with an inbuilt defense system that can withstand any pain.

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41. The Baby is the Guru

Kusuma completed her nine months of pregnancy. U.G. thought it would be expensive to admit her in a hospital for delivery. So he arranged for two nurses and a doctor to attend on her at home. On 28th January 1958 Kusuma delivered a bonny son.

Upon knowing that U.G.'s wife gave birth to a son, Dixon arrived with many gifts for the child and cans of fruit juices for Kusuma. He made regular visits bringing on each occasion baby food and other essential things. Over a period time, he developed a perfect rapport with the child. Sometimes he also babysat in U.G.'s absence. Since he was not working, U.G. personally attended to the infant's hygiene inlcuding changing its diapers. Kusuma was duly impressed by his service and patience.

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U.G. started another experiment, this time in rearing an infant. He began to observe keenly the movements, gestures and behavior of the child; he felt that he learned many things he had not known before about the human being.

The child's movements changed noticeably day by day. The infant learned to move its muscles and limbs by kicking its legs and arms in the air and turning its body in a number of ways. U.G. saw that the child lay dorsally in the bed close-fisted; even when U.G. tried to open the fists, they would revert to the original condition. The head was tilted a little to the side; on the same side, the arm was stretched a little and the other one was bent and raised upwards a little. In this particular posture the head of the child was lifted upwards and sometimes the child jerked a little now and then. U.G. compared all these movements, gestures and postures and found them akin to the *asanas* in yoga. He thought that the movements were some sort of tonic neck reflex.

When an object was shown to the child, he focused his eyes on it but his head was still in the former tilted position. If the thing moved a little, the eyes of the child followed it. But when it was suspended from the top, he did not respond to it.

After a few months, the tonic neck reflex action disappeared and subsequently the child began to turn his head normally in all directions. Later, the hands moved in regular patterns. He was able to keep his head erect. Earlier he was attracted only to moving articles. But now he began to look at stationary things around him as well. Slowly the child began to recognize the mother and the father and his eyes followed their movements. When something was within his reach, he would grasp it and put it in his mouth. U.G. interpreted this as the child trying to know the object.

Sudden laughter, shrill shouts and all sorts of vocal sounds of the child he interpreted as his exercising his vocal cords and lungs. Perhaps the child was developing his abilities to talk. Spontaneous bodily movements and jerks trained the child's body in a natural way.

One day, U.G. put a little sugar in the mouth of the child. The child spat it out. It's a common belief that children like sweet things. But U.G. thought that this was a

cultivated habit. He felt that, in fact, sweet and sour things taste the same to the infants.

Every day, every week and every month, U.G. observed the changes in the child's growth and behavior. He mused 'This child is my first guru.' They named the boy Sisir Kumar and affectionately nicknamed him Bujji.

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The financial front of U.G.'s household was deteriorating day by day; but somehow they were making both ends meet and days were trundling. Assistance came from some corner or other. U.G. was not perturbed by his financial bottlenecks. From 11 am to 3 pm he conducted his cooking classes. People would bring baskets full of vegetables and other items. From 5 O'clock to 9 pm in the evening he spent his time with his intellectual gathering, the "Philosophers' Corner".

Kusuma wondered how her husband could remain unperturbed in the midst of their financial strain. To ease herself, she jotted down her thoughts in a dairy now and then. In it she expressed her dejection at the present state and her intention to leave the U.S. with her two sons.

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Back in India, Bharati and Usha went to Poona to their elder aunt for holidays. Kamala obtained passports for the two girls to go to America. In fact, U.G. once thought of getting his children to America. But Kusuma did not agree to the proposal. Kamala wanted to send them to the US for some reason or other. She wrote a letter to Kusuma. In her reply Kusuma expressed her anger and wrote: 'How did you get the foolish idea of sending the grown-up girls to America? Be patient for some more time. I'm coming back to India with Vasant and Bujji. Till then please take care of my children.'

When the children were in their maternal parent's home in Poolla, their youngest aunt Minakshi of Narasapuram came to Poolla and took them to her place. She admired the great beauty of the children and began looking for opportunities for them to act in the movies. Kusuma learned about it and went wild; she wrote a strongly-worded letter to her sister expressing her total disapproval of the idea. She advised her daughters too not to entertain such foolish ideas. As a result, the proposal was dropped.

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42. Kusuma's Return to India

One day, Kusuma said to U.G., 'I want to put this out to you. I don't know if you will approve. At this point of time, it would be better for all of us to go back to India for good. I am terribly depressed about our daughters' future. I no longer wish to leave them alone; they are growing up and they need maternal care and nurturing. They are eager to see all of us.'

U.G. replied, 'I would like us to stay here and bring up our children here. I'll search for a suitable job for you. Somehow we can manage here.'

'No, I won't take up any job. I am fed up with this country. Our children should stay and go to school in India, not here. I don't like the idea of bringing them up here. What's here for us in this country? Do we have a steady income to live on? How can you expect me to live here with all our children for an indefinite time?' she said in strong words. U.G. asserted, 'I have nothing more to do with India. As you know, we have no property to depend on. It would be very difficult for me to start a new life in India. We can survive here somehow. If necessary, I may take up a job somewhere. Though I am not totally willing, I will think of it.'

Kusuma knew pretty well that he would not work. 'I must go back to India. I miss my daughters. All these years I left them alone and unhappy as if they are orphans. If you want, you can stay back,' she said clearly. Such discussions went on a number of times and ended in heated exchange of words.

Days rolled on. As days passed, U.G.'s life seemed to be uncertain. He lapsed into inactivity, indecisiveness and lethargy. One question remained unanswered: In spite of his precarious financial situation, why was he holding back from applying for a green card which perhaps could make him eligible for social welfare?

Of late, U.G. had a premonition that some horrid days were afoot, that some terrible peril was imminent. The stay in America was slowly but surely coming to an end.

U.G. and Kusuma agreed that she should return to India. But there was no money to meet the expenses. U.G. decided to sell off the 1,600 square yards of land which he still owned in Bezawada. This was the same land that his uncle Jagannadham had advised him earlier not to sell. U.G. wrote a letter to his uncle Jagannadham and other friends to try to sell it. The original title for the land was with Jagannadham. U.G. asked him to remit the proceeds of the sale through the American Express Company.

After a month, the site was sold for a handsome amount of $5,000. U.G. got the sale amount in dollars. He purchased air tickets for Kusuma and Vasant. Whatever money remained U.G. gave to Kusuma.

The date of the departure was fixed ~ 15th November 1959. The date of the journey was fast approaching. One day, all of a sudden, Kusuma sank into a deep depression. A flood of fearful ideas invaded her mind. Perhaps she dreaded to face the brute realities of going back to a life in India. She lost the family fortune and was returning empty-

handed. Henceforth, she would have to face life all alone, rear the children and live her own life without her husband's companionship and support. Where should she start her new life and how?

On the appointed day, she boarded the plane with Vasant and Bujji. The plane landed in Bombay. The passengers one by one slowly got off the plane. Kusuma followed an elderly couple, Sadasivam and Kamakshi, who traveled with her on the plane and with whom she had become acquainted. They helped her find her baggage in the baggage area. The time was 1:30 am. They all assembled in the lounge. Kusuma looked for her sister Kamala to whom she had written earlier informing her of her arrival and asking her to receive her at the airport, but there was no trace of her. Kusuma handed a hundred dollar bill to Sadasivam to please exchange it into Indian currency. Meanwhile, Sadasivam's cousin came to receive him and his wife. Kamakshi, his wife, said 'Kusuma, we are going to my cousin's house. In a week we'll be leaving for Madras.' She gave Kusuma her address in Madras and offered to help if she came to Madras.

Kusuma waited for more than three hours at the airport. In the early morning she came out with Vasant and Bujji, took a taxi to go the Victoria Terminus Railway station and boarded a train to Poona. When she arrived in Poona she hired a taxi to go to Kamala's residence on Deccan Gymkhana Road. Kamala answered the door and was surprised to see her sister. 'O, Kusuma, come on in! Where is Tilak? I sent him to receive you,' Kamala asked.

'I asked you to receive me at the airport in Bombay. And who is Tilak? How could I recognize him?'

'Why, yes, he knows you.'

'No one showed up. I waited for hours,' said Kusuma with an angry tone.

'I had to attend to an urgent lawsuit in the court. So I sent him. I wonder how missed you. I'm sorry for the inconvenience. Please come in,' Kamala tried to explain.

Kamala was amazed looking at Vasant, 'How wonderful, it's unbelievable! Vasant is able to walk! I'm so happy, indeed,' and took Bujji into her hands, 'Oh, he is an American boy,' and kissed him several times.

After washing, Kusuma changed her dress. '*Akkayya*[86], may I play the *vina* for a bit?' as she noticed a *vina* in a corner. 'As you wish, go ahead. It has been sitting there untouched for years. I don't have time even to clean the instrument,' said Kamala nonchalantly.

Kusuma slowly removed the cloth cover, cleaned the instrument and tuned it. She was happy playing the *vina;* it helped her forget her state of mind temporarily. Meanwhile, Bujji cried; so she put aside the *vina* to attend on him. Vasant was busy reading some comic strips.

Later that night, after dinner, Kamala enquired about her life in America. Kusuma gave a detailed account of the family's financial straits during their stay there.

Kamala was very much surprised and upset, 'O God, you have an odd husband. He is a man of….' As she was about to say something, Kusuma interrupted her saying, 'What's the use of blaming someone else for my fate?' Kusuma did not relish others' sly remarks against her

husband. Anyone criticizing him had to answer her first.

Kamala heaved a big sigh and said, 'What a tragedy! As a matter of fact, you are the richest among our sisters. Sometimes we even envied your luxurious life.... But don't be disheartened. Luckily, yesterday I received a letter from Durgabai Deshmukh informing me that there are a number of job vacancies in the Andhra Mahila Sabha in Hyderabad. She asked me if I knew anyone for the jobs. Now you can go and settle there happily. It's the proper and convenient place for you in every respect. You can also have your children with you there. People there will look after your every need.'

'I have no objection to taking up a job there. I wish to spend my time in a new environment and among new persons for some time. I need a soothing atmosphere. I think this will suit my present situation,' Kusuma responded enthusiastically, although on second thoughts she started having doubts about her abilities to work at such a job.

A couple of days later, the sisters traveled with the children to Hyderabad by train and stayed with an old acquaintance. After lunch, they both went to the Andhra Mahila Sabha located in the Vidyanagar area. At that moment, Durgabai was not in her office. They spent some time under the trees waiting. Suddenly, Kusuma had a strong feeling that she did not have enough mental stamina to take up a job right away; her spirits were low. She said in rather timid voice, '*Akkayya*, somehow I feel that I can't take up a job right now. I must first see my daughters Bharati and Usha. I miss them badly. And I also want to spend some time in Poolla.' Kamala was surprised at her change of mind.

Kamala tried to persuade her: 'Kusuma, remember, opportunity knocks at your door only once; one must grab it with both hands.' There was a long silence. Kusuma was in a great dilemma; her mind was oscillating. She wanted to avoid deciding on the spot. She answered in a feeble voice. '*Akkayya*, please understand me. At this moment I am beside myself; everything is vague, fuzzy and uncertain. Please don't force me to take up the job!' Kamala became furious at her sister's indecision, but said quietly, 'As you please. Don't feel obligated. As we've come all the way, let's meet Durgabai. She is a highly reputed personality. After meeting her you can decide any way you like; I won't force you.'

'I'm sorry *Akkayya*! You please go and visit her alone. I don't feel like seeing her. I'll sit here on this lawn and wait for you,' said Kusuma.

'So be it.'

In the afternoon at 3 O'clock Kamala met Durgabai alone. After about half an hour she returned to Kusuma. 'Kusuma, Durgabai has received me graciously. I told her about you. I explained your present situation. She wanted you to make a decision within a month. She said that if you work here, you will have separate living quarters for yourself and your children. Children's school expenses would be borne by them. Above all, there will be a good salary. She was pleased to know that you have returned from America. It's a golden opportunity. Now the decision rests with you,' Kamala concluded on a hopeful note.

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The next day, the sisters proceeded to Poolla by train. Kusuma met her daughters, Bharati and Usha, after four years. It was a joyful reunion. Kusuma was on cloud nine to see her grown up daughters.

Bharati and Usha were overjoyed to see their brother Vasant walking. For the first time, they saw their younger brother Bujji. Kusuma was very much delighted to see all her children at one place. Bharati and Usha expected that their mother would bring them some presents and were disappointed to see that she had not.

The neighbors and her relatives came over to say hello to her. After two days, Kamala was ready to return to Poona. She told her mother Ratnamma, 'Mother, Kusuma seems to be upset and crestfallen. Her talk is sometimes disconnected and there is no coherence in her speech or actions. Be watchful.'

Her mother replied that she too had noticed it. Ratnamma was in tears. After some time, Kamala told her mother, 'After Kusuma recovers a little mentally, please persuade her to go to Hyderabad. There is an excellent job waiting for her in the Andhra Mahila Sabha. It's a suitable and comfortable job for her. There she can definitely lead a peaceful life with all her children.' Ratnamma assured her she would. The next day Kamala returned to Poona.

About ten days later, when Kusuma settled into her own rhythm, Ratnamma slowly broached the subject of the job in Hyderabad with her, stating, 'It's useless to brood over the past. You must look to the future. You have children to take care of. Think about your daughters to be married. I can come with you to Hyderabad to help.'

Kusuma heard her quietly. Her mind went in several directions at the same time and she could not make up her mind. Later, she dropped the idea of working in Hyderabad and decided to remain in Poolla. She was reluctant to do anything which required a rigid routine. She was a housewife with an epiphytic nature and lacked individuality. In a sense she was a prisoner of her own mind. But she had other ideas.

In January 1960, one day all of a sudden, Kusuma thought of going to Madras along with Bujji. It was not a planned trip. She remembered the old couple from the airplane who had offered her help. Besides, she wanted to exchange her dollars into rupees and collect some household articles that she and U.G. had left in the house of Kamat before their departure for the U.S.

She waited for the Howrah Mail at the Eluru railway station. The train was running late. An hour had already passed. She became impatient. She was carrying with her a suitcase and a handbag. A sixth sense in her prompted her to postpone the journey. When the bell rang announcing the arrival of the train she was still in a dilemma. The train came and was tightly packed. Nevertheless she boarded the train. There was not even standing room. She kept her suitcase in front of the lavatory. A melee of passengers rushed in. Kusuma was pushed to the side. In that commotion her suitcase was snatched by some thief. The train started to move. A few seconds later she noticed that her suitcase was missing. She shouted, 'Where is my suitcase, I had it here?' and searched here and there. She was dazed, baffled and utterly bewildered; her whole being collapsed. Her entire body started to shiver and she had a breakdown. She yelled, 'Where is my suitcase? Please help me; I lost my suitcase. Kindly find my suitcase,' and tears rolled down from her eyes. She almost fainted.

Noticing her pathetic and helpless condition, one passenger got up from his seat and offered it to her. He asked around in the whole compartment to see if anyone had seen it or taken it by mistake. Other passengers also helped him in trying to trace it. But no one found it. It was gone. Kusuma was exhausted. She tried to sleep closing her eyes but sleep eluded her. Her heart was plunged in sorrow. Everything seemed dead. She never dreamt that she would have to face such a tragedy. Unfortunately, she even lost the address of the Madras couple. The suitcase

also contained valuable photos and letters from Krishnaji as well as her passport. She had high hopes to chalk out her future with the help of the old Tamil couple. Now everything was gone. She was betrayed by fate!

In the early morning she got off the train at the Central Station in Madras. She proceeded to Dr. Kamat's house in Adyar. Kamat was much surprised at seeing her. Kusuma was beyond recognition. All her beauty had disappeared. Her face became haggard and pale. Her eyes blinked and fluttered. She appeared like a princess in disguise who was running for her life, being pursued by her enemies. What happened to her? Where was U.G.? 'Come in, Kusuma, when did you return from America? Has Vasant also come with you? Is he able to walk now?' As he enquired about her, Kamat picked up Bujji from Kusuma's arms and said, 'We're so happy that you are blessed with a son. But why do you look so crestfallen?' Kusuma stammered for a while, briefly answering him without giving scope for more searching questions.

'Has U.G. not come with you?' enquired Kamat. She shook her head. Meanwhile, Kamat's wife intervened and took Kusuma and the child inside. Kusuma had her bath and put on the same sari again. 'If you had asked me, I could have given you a sari,' Kamat's wife said. The child was given milk. After breakfast Kusuma told Kamat that she had lost her suitcase in the train and that she had come there to collect her belongings which were left with them. Kamat said that Subba Rao had sent away most of her things to her place and that the few things that remained there still had been stored away, which she could of course take.

Kusuma was asked for lunch. But she said she would first go out for an half an hour before she had lunch and wanted to leave Bujji in Mrs. Kamat's care. Then she visited another close associate of their family by name Raja Ratnem who was also surprised to see her. He too enquired about her and U.G. In response to his affectionate and sympathetic enquiries which touched her heart, Kusuma broke down and wept like a child. 'What happened?' he asked anxiously.

After a pause, she wiped her tears slowly with the hem of her sari and said in a choked voice, '*Annayya*, yesterday while traveling in the train, I lost my suitcase which contained dollars, valuable letters of Krishnaji and some rare photographs. Besides my passport there was also an important local address in it.'

'O, God in heaven! What a bad luck!' Raja Ratnem was moved by pity. He comforted her and offered her money and help to tide over her present plight. He said she might have to make a report to the police regarding her passport; but she couldn't remember for sure if she had in fact packed her passport in her suitcase.

For the first time, Kusuma felt relieved as if she was being taught to see life in a new light. On her way out of Raja Ratnem's house, she ran into a former maid servant called Dhanammal. Kusuma asked her to accompany her to Nungumbakam to trace an address. She vaguely remembered that the Tamil couple lived there. Dhanammal readily agreed. Kusuma asked her to show up at 4:00 pm at Kamat's place.

Kusuma returned to Kamat's house. Bujji was still asleep. She had lunch, nursed Bujji and sank into a deep sleep along with the baby. There was a heavy knock on the door. 'Kusuma, Wake up! Your suitcase is found. Someone has brought it. Your troubles are over. How lucky you are!' Kamat was yelling. Kusuma suddenly woke up and opened her eyes to see no one there. It was just a dream.

Dhanammal came at 4 O'clock in the afternoon and they both went to Nungumbakam.

Kusuma only knew the names of the Tamil couple ~ Sadasivam and Kamakshi. She tried doggedly to locate their house for hours but to no avail. They came back to Kamat's house. Thanking Dhanammal Kusuma gave her hundred rupees for her help. That night, she suddenly remembered that Kamakshi told her on the plane that they were related to S.S. Vasan, the famous film producer and owner of the Gemini movie studio.

The next morning she visited the Gemini Studios and enquired there giving graphic descriptions of the old couple. 'Sorry, madam, but no one is related to Mr.Vasan with those names,' reported the manager after talking to his boss.

That same night, Kusuma left for Poolla along with her belongings. Kamat sent a boy to assist her at the station. When she arrived in Poolla she narrated her misfortunate to her mother Ratnamma. She did not recover from this traumatic experience until many days later.

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The departure of Kusuma along with the children gave a modicum of relief to U.G. He was no longer manacled to family responsibilities. Though a fortune was lost beyond recovery, his mission of making his son stand on his own legs and walk was fulfilled and the boy's future was assured.

As usual, U.G. spent his time with friends discussing current topics with them and conducted cooking classes. He visited Dixon twice or thrice in a month. He received $200 from him regularly and managed his expenses with it.

He was totally detached with no goals to reach, no mission to fulfill and no axe to grind. Life ahead was uncertain and unknown.

From the start, some persons in the Theosophical Society were vehemently opposed to Dixon's giving $200 each month to U.G. They didn't quite appreciate why a Theosophist should support someone who had bitterly criticized the society. They created hurdles in the way of Dixon's paying the money to U.G. To pressure him they approached his daughter who tried to persuade the old man time and again to abstain from giving money away to U.G. He finally yielded to the pressure.

In April 1960, when U.G. visited him, he explained his position rather sheepishly: 'I'm so sorry. I am surrounded by human vultures. They forced my daughter to prevail over me. I am helpless. Take this envelope; it contains $2,500. This is my last help to you. You are free to spend it as you like and this is my last meeting with you,' saying this he plopped down onto a sofa.

U.G. looked at him gratefully. He was moved by deep admiration for Dixon. Dixon went on, 'I don't know what you're going to be, but remember my word, one day you'll make an indelible mark on the world. I cherished your company all these years. God Almighty will always be guiding you, good luck!' He rose to his feet and kissed U.G. on his forehead.

U.G. stood up and said, 'Well, I am so grateful to you. I too will cherish your encounter for many years to come,' warmly shaking his hand. Thus, the bond between U.G. and Dixon came to an abrupt end after three years.

43. The Last Straw

On receiving so much money, for a few days U.G. was disengaged completely. One day, he suddenly felt an urge to go back to India. He fixed a date for his journey. He wrote letters to Kusuma and Narasimha Rao. He purchased a few gifts for his children. He vacated his flat paying all his dues and gave away certain household things to his friends.

His friends arranged a farewell party for him. One of his friends asked, 'When can we expect you back in America?' It was a million-dollar question, indeed. U.G. maintained a silence. Later, he said, 'I have no clear idea whether I will even come back. It all depends on so many circumstances.' U.G. bade good-bye to America.

In the month of May 1960, U.G. returned to Madras via Bombay and from there he proceeded to Narasimha Rao's place in Machilipatnam by train. His grandmother Durgamma was then living permanently with Narasimha Rao after reluctantly renting the house in Gudiwada.

The same evening, Kusuma arrived from Poolla along with Bharati, Usha, Vasant and Bujji. Bharati and Usha saw their father after many years. U.G. was pleased to see his grown-up daughters. They would not leave their father's presence, all the time calling him "*Appa*"[87]. He presented them with some fine dress material and other curios.

After so many years all the family members had gathered in one place. Durgamma was overjoyed. Kusuma looked askance at her husband. She had a myriad questions and doubts about him. She was mentally elated and excited; but at the same time, she was also somewhat depressed. 'Will he stay here or will he not? How could I stop him from going away? Do I have enough mental strength to fight him? Will he respect my wishes?'

U.G. went out to meet his old friends and enquired about their activities. He was told that Venkata Rao, the Harijan boy who had worked as his secretary, was settled very well in the Revenue department of the Government of Andhra Pradesh and was holding a key position somewhere in coastal Andhra. Siva Ram was also well settled.

He was also informed by someone that in the Bezawada land deal, from which he had obtained money for Kusuma's travel expenses, a significant amount was embezzled by some people. U.G. had showed no reaction to the news.

That night, Kusuma told her husband her sad story of the lost suitcase in a pathetic voice, 'I am an unfortunate being. I lost many things.' U.G. said coolly 'Don't brood over the past. Forget it and sleep well.'

U.G. spent about a week in Machilipatnam amidst family and friends. Most of them thought that U.G. would stay back and start a fresh life; they felt that since he was a multifaceted genius, he could choose any vocation of his choice anywhere.

But U.G. had different ideas about his future. He never entertained the idea of leaving his wife and children to their fate. He wanted to mould his life in his own way and resettle with pride. He wanted to put forth his ideas before his wife for her approval and consent.

After a week, along with all his family members he went to Madras and stayed at the Dasprakash Hotel. He visited Kamat, Raja Ratnem and other old associates.

There was an agonizing lull before a mighty storm. Both U.G. and Kusuma wanted to express their respective views regarding their future life. One day, Kusuma presented her views clearly before U.G. rather hesitantly.

'Kindly listen to me and pay attention. Let's be realistic. Our children are growing up. We have to take care of them during this critical period. They're tired of staying under the shelter and at the mercy of others like orphans. They're mentally hurt. We will be facing onerous responsibilities including their education and marriages. We have to nurture our children with parental love and care which they have been deprived of all these years. I sincerely appeal and pray to you, let's stay in India together and we can start a fresh life, as you are quite capable of doing it. This is my earnest request to you. Our children need our support and sustenance,' she pleaded.

U.G. listened to her silently without any apparent feeling; such a proposal from her was not unexpected. He was thoughtful and became grim for a few moments. He spoke as if he was appreciative of her point of view:

'Kusuma, I think that your ideas are quite reasonable and fair. Our children do need our care and affection. There is no problem in starting life afresh. I can shoulder all responsibilities. I am quite confident that I can as well regain the old glory of the family. I don't wail over the colossal loss of ancestral property. I have no regrets for what had happened in the the past. But one thing I am certain of: my life is not bound to India. I can't imagine myself staying here and starting a new life. No, I can't.'

U.G. continued: 'Kusuma, I have come to a positive decision. There's a tract of land in your name in Poolla. We sell it off and with that money all of us will go to America or London and settle there. I'll begin a new life there. We can all stay together happily.'

Kusuma was taken aback at this suggestion. She never expected that he would ask for this. Her face became livid. She replied slowly:

'I don't think it's wise to sell off the land and settle down abroad. I am fed up with living in foreign countries. Our two girls, Bharati and Usha, are growing up and an alien culture is not conducive to their development. I'm not in favor of this proposition. I don't understand why you want to live there.'

The expression on her face was firm and unyielding. But, at the same time, a lurking fear plagued her.

U.G. was grim and silent. He never begged anyone in his whole life. His ego was hurt.

'Kusuma, you know very well my nature and temperament. We lived together many years and shared our joys and sorrows. For various reasons our conditions have changed out of my control,' he halted for a moment and said rather sadly, 'I too am tormented and can't figure out which way to go. At this juncture, this is the only option left for me ~ to muster some finances and start a fresh life abroad.' He continued, 'In certain matters I am unable to compromise. I have my own ways of looking at things. I go as my instinct dictates. So please don't ask me to settle down here in India with all the ugly heads rising against me and with snide remarks behind my back. My pride will not succumb to them,' U.G. urged her on a rather supplicant note.

Kusuma maintained a stony silence as if there was nothing more to say. Her deafening silence

disturbed him.

'You don't want to think of the future welfare of children, especially of the two girls? Why you are so adamant?' she questioned.

The two were caught up in their own differing standpoints and there were heated exchanges. At the end of the conversation, U.G. said emphatically, 'There is no use of dragging on this issue any more. If you want to come with me, do as I say. I won't force you or order you. Think well and act as you see fit. But one thing I wish to make clear – under any circumstances it is unthinkable for me to stay in India.'

So saying, U.G. left the room in a huff. That was his *coup de grace*. Kusuma realized that if she wanted to be with her husband, she had no other door open except dispose off the land. Reluctantly she decided to go to Poolla, consult with her parents and well-wishers and seek their wise counsel. She went to Poolla along with the children and sounded U.G.'s proposal with her kith and kin.

One of her close relatives exclaimed upon hearing the proposal, 'This is the only financial backing left for you. If you lose this ground, your children's future will become more grim and uncertain. Don't do it.' Her mother Ratnamma warned her, saying, 'Your husband is a spendthrift. He squandered away his huge ancestral property. How can you trust him any more? If this property is also sold off, do you think that he will stay with you steadily with that money in his hand and take care of you and your children? When you left for America you had a number of gold ornaments; where are they now? Think about your children and stick to your responsibilities. Don't be carried away by his sweet words or fear his tantrums.' Other family members endorsed her view.

Kusuma was in a quandary now, unable to decide which way to go. She could not ignore her husband's ultimatum or nor could she readily agree with the advice of her mother. If the land is not sold, her husband would discard her once and for all, which she was not prepared for. How could she drag her life all alone without his support and help? She became tired and sank into a deep slumber.

Ratnamma noticed her daughter sleeping at an odd hour in the evening. Kusuma woke up and felt dull and inactive. Ratnamma continued her tirade against U.G.: 'I am afraid you still have a soft corner for your husband. You are not aware of the hard realities of life. He will gobble up that money in no time. Don't trust him any more. Why did he come back to India at all? All his resources must have been exhausted. So far he has only mentally tortured you here and abroad,' she concluded on a derogatory note.

Kusuma who was silently listening to her mother all this time suddenly rose to her feet. '*Amma*, will you keep quiet for God's sake! Don't blame people with your wild tongue. I will never tolerate accusations and abuses behind his back. Shut up and get out,' she shrieked hysterically.

Ratnamma was shocked at her anger and left the room. She never relished her son–in–law's intellectual pride or arrogant behavior. Kusuma consoled herself and slowly regained her composure. Later, she took a bold and final decision against the sale of the land. She was ready to face the consequences.

Ratnamma went to see her eldest daughter Kamala in Poona. Before going, she advised Kusuma to fight her own battles and not to depend on anyone for support, as everyone in the family had problems their own. Although Kusuma knew that her husband would be expecting her any

day, she did not leave for Madras right away. She thought that as time passed tempers might cool down and circumstances might turn in her favor.

On that day, unexpectedly, she visited a friend named Chittemma. Chittemma enquired her about when she came from Madras and when she was returning to America.

'I came a few days ago and going back to Madras again. I heard that you have started a business venture in Eluru. Is that right?' Kusuma asked.

'No, no; not really. It's a business we already had. Since my husband has been paralyzed, I'm just revitalizing it and my brother is helping me with it.'

'Chitty, I would like to ask you a favor.'

'By all means.'

'Could you lend me your gold earrings for a few days? Mine were lost. I will return them soon.'

'That's no problem. Take them right away,' saying this she removed her two earrings and handed them to Kusuma. 'Keep them with you for as long as you need.'

On the same day, Kusuma boarded a train to Madras with all her children. She was determined to behave in a cool, calm and calculated manner with her husband. She wanted to convince him to stay back in India and she rehearsed in her mind several times what she would say.

Kusuma arrived in Madras and went to Dasaprakash Hotel where U.G. was staying all these days. On seeing her, the manager gave her the room keys. Bharati opened the door. She ordered snacks for the children. U.G. did not show up even by lunch time. After a light lunch Kusuma slept for a while to refresh her tired mind. All of sudden, she woke up as if some one hit her. She opened her eyes and no one was there. Bujji was sleeping by her side and the other children were playing outside. For no apparent reason, she was enveloped by despair followed by an acute sinking feeling. She lost her nerve. All her previous resolve to face the challenge ebbed away.

Meanwhile, U.G. came into the room followed by the children. He looked rather tired but serious. After a few minutes, U.G. queried, 'What happened at Poolla?' Kusuma kept quiet for a while.

'I can guess that your cretinous mother and other pettifoggers did not approve the sale of land, even if you wanted to,' he said on a disgusted note. Kusuma was still silent. After a brief pause, U.G. continued, 'Well, so be it. From now on you can carry on as you like and I too will go my own way. I had several plans for our future. Now everything is over and finished.'

'How could that be? What you're saying is unfair. You want to desert me and my children? I can't understand your position. Why can't you think of settling down in India?'

'No, that's impossible.'

Kusuma became angry: 'Then why did you marry at all and beget children? Don't you have any responsibility to take care of your wife and children?'

U.G closed his eyes nonchalantly. 'That dream has vanished. I am caught in a hapless situation.

Somewhere things went wrong and did not go smoothly as I expected. Leave me alone. You have a right to live freely as you like. You have college degrees, relatives to fall back upon and intelligence. I have no objection to whatever way you want to live. To me, settling down in India is unthinkable. There is nothing more to add,' said U.G. rather bluntly. The two were at loggerheads for a while.

Kusuma's was in despair. She started shouting in a high-pitched voice: 'You're speaking cruelly and behaving in an irresponsible manner. It's unbecoming of you as a man of high caliber. You're acting like autocrat; you're selfish and domineering to the hilt. You have never cared for others' opinions.' She stopped, took a heavy breath and then continued, 'You spent away all the ancestral properties recklessly. Did your ever earn money by yourself at any time in your life?' She thundered and looked into him sharply. U.G. did not respond immediately.

Her acerbic and acid remarks had touched a sensitive chord in U.G. All of a sudden, he became furious and rose to his feet. He looked ferocious. The children were terrified. He caught hold of a clay keg on the side table and hit his wife over her head. The keg was broken. Kusuma cried in pain. Blood oozed from her head.

Vasant was terrified and shouted, 'Police, police!' Bharati immediately closed his mouth with her hand and said 'Shut up!' The children were aghast and began to cry. Holding her head with both hands Kusuma leaned back on the bed. Blood spread all over her face. 'Beat me again if you wish. Beat me till I die and get rid of me. I shall be happy to die in your hands,' she wept bitterly.

U.G. walked out of the room in a huff. This is the first time U.G. had abused his wife physically. Children gathered around their mother. Bharati tried to nurse her wound with a wet piece of cloth. Kusuma lay across on the bed like a corpse; her mind went totally blank. Then she slowly recovered from the shock.

She felt that all was over; the time of eventual parting of ways had come. She still expected, against all odds, her husband to come back and apologize for his behavior. Later that night, U.G. did return but slept calmly as though nothing had transpired earlier that day. The next morning, Bharati told her father, '*Appa*, we want to go to Poona to our aunt's place. Our granny also is there. Please get us the tickets.'

U.G. purchased the necessary tickets and put them on a train. While getting into the train, Kusuma looked at her husband and said grimly, 'Goodbye, we're leaving.' 'All right,' replied U.G. dryly. He gave her a mere fifty rupees for incidental expenses. She needed more money for other necessities and their return journey. But she was loath to ask for more money. She wouldn't demean herself begging for it.

U.G. stood silently a little distance away from the train window. Kusuma looked longingly at her husband without blinking her eyes. She wondered for a moment if she would ever see him again.

An old woman, perhaps practically blind, shouted in Tamil, 'Please help me! Please help me to board the train.' U.G. took her into the unreserved compartment and helped her sit. Then he returned to the place where he had been standing earlier.

The signal was given and it was the time for the train to leave. The children waved farewell with their hands and U.G. reciprocated mechanically. While the train was moving, Kusuma also waved her hand involuntarily. A shrill whistle sounded from the engine. By that time, U.G. was

walking away fast on the platform. Kusuma caught a glimpse of her husband in the crowd, far away. That was the last time Kusuma saw her husband.

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As his reconciliation plans with his family had totally failed, U.G. decided to go his own way. He went to the bank, withdrew the balance he had left, closed his account, vacated the hotel and purchased a ticket to go to Delhi.

U.G. was jettisoned into a state of uncertainty. Ever since he was born he was the uncrowned prince without any opposition or hurdle. In course of time, he lost his fortunes and tumbled down from the peak of his life. Yet he was never depressed, demoralized or lost his confidence in himself. All his life U.G. was always giving but he himself never stretched out his hand seeking rescue.

There was a paradigm shift in his ongoing life. Although he was unperturbed as his life came to a grinding halt, a kind of helplessness set in U.G.'s life. He had become totally indifferent to everything. He discarded his relatives and friends. After that moment, he never thought about his past life or attachments. He was ushered into a state of detachment, a complete abnegation of all bonds. In the ongoing journey of life, in his search for truth (if there was any) his ultimate goal (which was unknown to him as yet) must be reached. Till then, perhaps, anyone and everyone, even his wife or his own children, might have to be sacrificed.

Dr. T. Kameswara Rao, U.G.'s childhood friend said, countering the rumors that were being spread about U.G., 'His is not a masquerading personality. He never betrayed anyone in his life. He is a man of sublime integrity; he is guileless and has a gracious personality. It's reflected in the fact that he put his son on his two legs and lost a fortune in the process. He cannot be so unscrupulous and ungrateful that he would push down his family from a precipice after using their money. This is nothing but character assassination by the arch rivals from his wife's side. A strange fate that yoked U.G. and his wife separated them in the moment of financial disaster.'

Thus U.G. was freed from the bonds of family life at the age of 42. He had undergone radical changes at the end of each cycle of seven years and this was his seventh, the septennial cycle. He stepped into a phase of unknown voyage. It started with the breakup of his family.

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Kusuma proceeded to Poona with her children. Nearly half of the little money U.G. had given him she spent on feeding her kids. She did not eat anything as she had lost her appetite in her grief. The train reached Poona an hour late.

Kamala was surprised by her unexpected arrival and did not seem too happy to receive them. She asked Kusuma rather bluntly, 'Did your husband desert you?' as if such an outcome was not unexpected. Meanwhile, their mother Ratnamma came out. She too was befuddled to find Kusuma and all her children standing there.

'Why did you come here? You should have gone to Poolla instead. Here Kamala is having her own domestic problems.'

Kusuma was non–plussed and her children were aghast. 'We have come to stay here for a few days. I'm mentally crippled. I need your support. Is it a crime to visit my own sister?' she asked feebly and meekly. Rudely interrupting her, Kamala said, 'Crime or no crime, it's impossible to

stay here. You'd better go back to Poolla before my own people come home. I can't feed you all. We have our own problems here,' thundered Kamala. Ratnamma supported her with a nod.

Kusuma was rattled by this unexpected ill-treatment of her before her children. She never dreamt that she would be turned out like a pariah so inhumanely. Her self-esteem was dealt a blow. Yet she said in a low, humble and desperate voice, '*Akkaiah*, I'm in dire need of psychological support and emotional nourishment from my own people. I thought I could have some solace in this crisis and I wish to stay here for some time to recover. I can't figure out why you are all behaving in an unbecoming manner.'

A curt reply came quickly, 'It's none of our fault if you don't know how to keep your husband. For God's sake, go back right now and leave us in peace. We can't help you with your problems,' said Kamala sternly. Ratnamma was silent as if she too endorsed the same view. Kusuma couldn't believe that it was that the same people who had earlier expressed their sympathy and solidarity and were ready to give her all their support. But when the need arose, they both turned hostile. Why were they so callous? Kusuma felt immense disgust within herself.

She had no money for the return journey. Where could she go? What was the way out? She gathered her sagging strength and turned around with the children. They were all hungry and they needed a fresh bath and rest. She was let down by her husband, her mother and her sister, each in his or her own way.

Kusuma and children trod slowly towards the main bazaar. At that moment, Kusuma did not even have her *Thali* [88] or any other gold jewelry on her. Even her daughters did not have any gold on them. Under these circumstances, she had no choice except to pawn the ear studs she had borrowed from her friend Chittemma to enable her to travel.

She walked to a pawnbroker shop. The shopkeeper examined them on a touchstone and said, '*Bahen*[89], these studs have more copper and less gold than normal; they may not fetch much money.' She was ready to take whatever amount he would give her and so she accepted. The shopkeeper finalized the deal and handed her a wad of ten rupee bills along with a receipt. She counted the money with bated breath. But it was not enough to go to Poolla and there was no other alternative source of money. What to do? With a sad face she stood silently. The shopkeeper could guess her helpless situation and gave her an extra twenty rupees.

Kusuma thankfully received it. They walked to the railway station. They washed in the waiting room. She purchased some *puris* for breakfast for everyone and some inexpensive bananas and figs. She enquired at the counter and learned that with the money she had left they could only go as far as Hyderabad. They got into the train and arrived early next morning in Secunderabad. Kusuma had only five rupees left. She remembered an old friend by name Papamma in Prakashnagar, in the Begumpeta area. She decided to go there. The rickshaw man demanded ten rupees. Kusuma and the children preferred to walk and by the time they got to Manohar Theater, a man driving a vacant rickshaw came forward to transport them: 'Where do you want to go? Please get in.'

'To Prakashnagar; how much do you want?'

'Whatever you please.'

'I will give you five rupees. OK?'

'Yes,' he said after a quick glance at her. After searching for it for a while, they got to Papamma's house. Kusuma paid the rickshaw driver with the five-rupee bill she had with her. He took a look at the bill and remarked, 'This is a soiled note. Please give me another.' Kusuma stood there helplessly. Meanwhile, Papamma could see that somebody was at the gate and came out. She was surprised to see Kusuma and her children. She extended a hearty welcome to them.

Papamma asked Kusuma where she was coming from. Kusuma tried to smile and said, 'From Poona. Well, the rickshaw driver wants a better five-rupee bill, but I don't have any change.' Papamma immediately paid him five rupees and sent him off.

After breakfast, Kusuma hit the bed, went into a deep sleep and forgot all her agony for the time being. After several hours of sleep, she woke up and wondered, 'Where I am now? Where are my children?' She scanned around as if she had just returned to the earth form another world.

Papamma stepped in to check how Kusuma was doing. They had their lunch together. The children were already fed and they were playing outside. Kusuma thought for a while before explaining her situation to her friend. She explained her problems in detail and Papamma sympathized with her. She said, 'Kusuma, ours is a lower middle class family with more expenses than income. My husband manages the finances of the house. He is a good man but closefisted. He neither borrows nor lends.' She felt sorry for her inability to help her childhood friend. 'But please don't worry. Stay here till I could find some money for you. Let me try,' she added.

Kusuma clarified to Panama that she only needed enough money to travel to Visakhapatnam where her brother, who was a famous doctor, lived.

'Yes, I've heard of him'

Kusuma added, 'As soon as I get to Visakhapatnam I will find a job. One more request: I don't want to take my children with me right now under these circumstances. If you have no objection, I will leave all of them except Bujji with you here for a few days. As soon as I have settled there, I will send you money to send the children to Visakhapatnam.' She waited anxiously for her her friend's reaction.

Papamma smiled and said, 'That's perfectly all right, they can stay here happily. They are as good as my own children. After you settle there, I will send them to you safely.' She added, 'And please do not bother to repay the money which I am going to give you.'

'No, I can't agree to that. I'll pay it back,' said Kusuma.

'Kusuma, please respect what I say. Right now I don't have much money. I have to borrow it. I'll also buy the tickets for your children when I send them. Will you please accept my help as a gift and give me the satisfaction?' Papamma pleaded emotionally.

Kusuma's eyes were full of tears at the unexpected magnanimous offer of help from her childhood friend. She profusely thanked her. Papamma promptly borrowed from several sources and raised the needed money. Fortunately, Papamma's husband was much pleased with the arrival of Kusuma and treated her hospitably. Kusuma left for Visakhapatnam with Bujji.

On her journey, Kusuma pondered over her unknown future. She was determined to face life

as it might come. She thought, 'What's the use of harping on the past. I must walk safely through thistles and brambles, and yes, on a stony path. I shall stand on my own legs boldly and prove my mettle.'

Kusuma entered her brother Dr. Seshagiri Rao's house with dried-up cheeks and a sunken face. Dr. Rao welcomed her affectionately. He was not aware of the latest development in her life.

After refreshing herself, she related her sad tale to her brother. He was moved to tears. '*Annayya*, please find a suitable job for me. I want to stand on my own legs. My eyes have opened now. I can now live by myself with my children and will not be a burden to anyone else,' said Kusuma with a decisive voice full of confidence.

Seshagiri Rao assured her, 'Look here, forget the past and don't feel gloomy. Within a few days I shall find a job for you.' In fact, within a week she found work in a tutorial college as an English tutor. After another week, she received an advance paycheck. From her first earnings she had the pawned ear studs released from Poona and returned them to Chittemma. Papamma sent Kusuma's three children to Visakhapatnam at her own expense, as she had promised.

For two or three months the family spent their lives together happily. Kusuma earned a reputation as a good English teacher. Time rolled on. Differences of opinion had developed between Kusuma and her sister-in-law on several issues. Though they were minor, Kusuma started to see them under a magnifying glass. How long could she continue in the shadow of her brother? She could go out and live separately. But she was hesitant to take that bold step. She was still mentally crippled and emotionally upset and lacked the strength of will to live her life independently.

All of a sudden, she decided to resign her job and live in Poolla with her children. She moved to Poola along with all her children except Bharati, who remained in Visakhapatnam to go to school there.

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44. The Drift Begins

U.G. arrived in Delhi and stayed with his childhood friend, Raghava Rao. Raghava Rao had migrated to Bihar a long time ago. There he became conversant in Hindi and later became the personal secretary to the President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

U.G. related to Raghava Rao at length about his foreign travels while he was still a member of Theosophical Society and also his talks in America as a speaker. 'Yes, I have heard about that through friends from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They have high regard for your services to our country,' applauded Raghava Rao. Later he suggested, 'U.G. why don't you meet our President? He will be happy to receive intellectuals of your caliber. He is himself is an extraordinary person and a man of saintly nature.'

'Yes, but on one condition, there should be no checkups to find out who I am or what my background is. If that suits you, I will see him.'

'All right, I'll see to it,' assured Raghava Rao. In the busy schedule of the President, Raghava Rao could only find ten minutes time for U.G. One day, a scheduled appointment, in the evening from 7 to 7.30 pm, was postponed for some reason. Raghava Rao sent for U.G. and at that time it so happened that U.G. had gone out to watch a movie. The messenger rushed to the theatre to find U.G. there. But U.G. had changed his mind about seeing the President.

Later, U.G. went to the residence of the Vice-President, Dr. Radhakrishnan. He sent in a note writing, 'U.G. Krishnamurti, Madras' on it. He was immediately ushered in.

On seeing U.G., Radhakrishnan kindly enquired, 'How are you U.G.? Where have you been all these years? What have you been doing?' remembering the firebrand nature of U.G.

'Right now I am on a world tour. I completed my stint as a speaker in America. I think my talks were well received. I tried to point to people there some hard realities about India and its teething problems,' said U.G. politely.

U.G. furnished the details of his talks in America. He remarked especially about the attitude of the American people toward India's foreign policy and expressed his own views on the subject frankly and fearlessly. Dr. Radhakrishnan appreciated his candid opinions.

'U.G., I think you should meet our Prime Minister, Nehruji. He takes an avid interest in meeting dashing young men like you. I'll ring him up and inform him about you. You can see him tomorrow afternoon. Before that, you may want to contact his personal assistant, Mr. Mathaiah. I will also put in a word to him to arrange the meeting.'

After some tea and snacks, U.G. thanked him. The usual screening was not conducted in the case of U.G. Radhakrishnan promptly called Nehruji on the phone and said 'Here's a man of high calibre who is also an unmatched orator. You should definitely see this young man, U.G. Krishnamurti, who has made some forays into America as a speaker.'

Nehruji agreed to meet U.G. U.G. went into his chambers, met his personal assistant, M.O. Mathaiah and informed him of his interview. After ten minutes, U.G. entered Nehruji's chambers.

Nehruji keenly observed U.G. and talked with him for ten minutes. U.G. furnished the details

of his American tour and of the reactions of Americans to the Indian foreign policy.

Suddenly, U.G. spoke frankly: 'Panditji, in my view, the inability of the Indian Government to solve the problem of Nagaland reflects the inefficiency of the Government.' Till that moment Nehruji had been pleasant and jovial in his manner. But suddenly he got irritated. 'How dare you criticize me and my government? This is rubbish! I don't have to take half-baked ideas from ex-patriots like you!' he shouted in a high-pitched voice. U.G kept smiling, saying, 'That's your tragedy!' After some time, Nehruji regained his calm and said 'Keep your opinions to yourself. Now tell me something about America.' It was nearing the time for U.G. to take leave of him.

'Well, Mr. Krishnamurti, tell me what you want to do for your country. Select any job which might suit you. I will try to appoint you in it immediately,' said Nehruji being pleased with U.G.'s intellectual capabilities.

U.G. said with a smile, 'No, thanks, sir. I don't have any interest in a job. I am a vagabond. I would like to tour different countries as a tourist.' He declined the offer politely.

'What? Should not intelligent people like you serve our country?'

'Sorry, sir!'

'Then what are your future plans?' Nehru asked inquisitively.

'Shortly I am proceeding to Moscow; from there, I will tour Bulgaria, Rumania, Poland and other communist countries. After that, I will go to London,' replied U.G.

'You've come at the right time. A trade delegation is leaving India shortly for Moscow. I'll add your name to the team. Will you go?' offered Nehruji.

'My ticket is already confirmed as a tourist. But thank you for your generous offer,' said U.G.

'It's up to you. Well, Krishnamurti, good luck!' Nehruji rose to his feet from his chair.

'I'm grateful to you for sparing your precious time. It's been a pleasure to see you,' U.G. got up too and shook his hands.

'Nehru appears to be very graceful. His personality is unparalleled. But he is totally egotistic. Power turns any man into an egotist,' thought U.G. on his way out.

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U.G. arrived in Moscow from Delhi. The places he could stay and the places he could visit were already fixed by the authorities. One had to stick to the schedule strictly, no deviations were allowed.

U.G. listened and read more about Russia. Under the leadership of Lenin, in October 1917, there was a great revolution in the country, and its political, economic, social and cultural fields had changed drastically. The result was described as "Heaven on the earth". The old system of exploitation of one person by another or one group by another group was buried there, never to come back. There was an absolute guarantee for the consummate development of the individual. It was also believed that this system could serve as a basis for the grand notion of "one government for the world".

In the present popular system, industrial, agricultural, technical, and other fields were reorganized. Religion had absolutely no place in it, directly or indirectly. The idea of God was dead in toto. The total mindset of the populace was radically transformed.

U.G.'s accommodation was fixed in a hotel facing the Kremlin. Apparently an old building was remodeled and converted into this hotel. Everything went on in a mechanical and disciplined manner.

The tumult of the freedom of choice in America was glaringly missing in this country. People in this country were not bothered about the rest of the world. Everything appeared artificial, unnatural and regimented.

It seemed as if the Russians knew only two Indians – one, Prime Minister Nehru and the other, the great movie actor Raj Kapoor. His film, *Awara,* was popular in Russia.

Tourists were accompanied by an official guide to show various interesting sites in the country. U.G. visited the Red Square which was considered the "heart of Moscow". He then walked toward Kremlin from where the city of Moscow spread day by day. Inside it, there had been a number of churches and Monasteries before. They had all been transformed into government offices now. The meetings of the Supreme Soviet were held in a grand building. U.G. passed by an old church in New Maidens area. He saw very few people in the church. They were old people who could die any day. There was not a single youth among them. U.G. visited Gorky Park. It was a park of culture and rest. Visitors were very sparse and children were at play. There was a small pond in the middle of the park. Tourists enjoyed boat trips on it. Near the pond, in an open air restaurant, U.G. tasted some Russian tea.

Later, U.G. visited the place where Lenin's body was preserved. People from different countries stood in a line for a peek at the body and U.G. joined the line. After some time, U.G. entered the room where the body was preserved. The room was ice cold. At the center of the room, on an elevated platform, the body was displayed in a glass case. It was covered up to its neck by a velvet blanket. Under the lights, Lenin appeared radiant as if he was alive.

After leaving that room, U.G., rested for some time on a bench and walked towards the central area of Kremlin; there were three ancient Churches there. At the Center, there was a high-tower construction by Ivan Veliky. At the top of the tower, a large bell was hanging.

The next day, U.G. traveled in a subway train. All the railway stations were constructed in marble. The arches along the railway track in the subway were decorated with candelabras. All the way on the route, there were pictures hanging on the walls and bronze statues. That was a great experience for U.G.

For the first time, U.G. came across a country without a shade of a religion. There were churches but there were no sermons. There were neither devotees nor philosophical visionaries. The people of Russia were creators of a new community and pioneers of the concept of equality. Their sole aim was the establishment of a welfare state.

There were no *jagadgurus* or spiritual cheats. There were industrial gurus and partners in work. The saying 'There is no famine where there is hard work'[90] was implemented in the country and proven as a fact.

U.G. concluded his tour of Moscow with a deep impression about the great Russians. He

thought that 'As a country I like America and as a people I like the Russians.'

As planned, U.G. left Moscow for other countries – Bulgaria, Rumania and Poland. After visiting them, he finally reached London via Italy, Spain and France.

In London, U.G. rented an apartment in the Knightsbridge Hotel, near Cadogan Square.

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45. Kusuma's Wheel of Fate

In Poolla, relatives came to know that U.G. finally deserted his wife and children and went his own way. Different people had different views about the breakup.

U.G.'s cousin Narasimha Rao opined that 'when his financial edifice crumbled, there was no other alternative left for him. Borrowing money from his kith and kin to reestablish himself was not his cup of tea. He was thrown into a helpless condition and so he left the scene.'

Others blamed Kusuma: 'she is not as innocent and weak as she appears. She is stubborn, obstinate and conceited. Her egoistic temperament and insistence that her word should always prevail resulted in her separation from her husband.'

Kusuma became a prey to strange situations and perplexities of life; she could not adapt herself to the unexpected challenges thrown at her from time to time. She became mentally impuissant and frail. Her agonizing struggle against several odds followed by a devastating emotional and mental distress of a break-up with her husband was the prime cause of her mental imbalance. She was caught up in the grip of dark uncertainty. When U.G. left her, the pulse of her life stopped.

U.G. was born into a huge fortune; as a consequence, Kusuma lived her life in luxury. Later, when the financial conditions worsened, her future looked grim and full of uncertainties. She never dreamt of such a drastic change of life. Perhaps she might have recovered mentally if, at least, her husband were by her side. But U.G. went away and her kith and kin humiliated her cruelly. She was thrown into deep despair and her supersensitive mind was wounded beyond repair.

In day-to-day life she was facing a major dilemma which was draining her energies. In order to escape from the stark realities of life, Kusuma created a happy dream world of her own and lived in it. Slowly she slid into the dreaded manic-depressive state. In that dreamy world, she would see her husband everywhere. She was finding comfort in his imaginary presence. This became a routine.

Everyday, she would spend some time in the imaginary world and again when she became conscious of the realities, she would shudder with fear of the unknown future. She often felt that some evil forces took possession of her and separated her from her husband. She roamed in the imaginary worlds trying to regain that "something" she had lost. Such mental agony had resulted in a fast deterioration of her physical health.

She was unable to focus her mind on anything. Thoughts crowding in a disorderly and disjointed manner suffocated her. Her mind was turbulent and chaotic, and everything seemed to be out of her control. Gradually, her discriminatory faculties also became much weaker.

She would murmur something within herself. Her attempts to collect her energies bore no fruit. She was unable to sleep, and even if she could, the sleep was disturbed. Very often, she spent sleepless nights. Her body was in pain as if it was crushed in a mortar. Besides, she had headaches; she was irritable, angry and depressed. She also hallucinated.

When she got up from her bed, she was unaware of her surroundings: was she in America or Madras or at Poolla? Where was her husband?

A terrible self-pity took hold of her. She imagined that everyone was taking vengeance on her

and everyone seemed suspect. Sometimes, her entire memory all of a sudden became blank and everything appeared as a mere vacuum. She had little hope of her ever seeing U.G. It seemed to her that her life was finished.

The life of uncertainties, fears, agitations and doubts dragged her into a completely inactive and inert state. She was a mental wreck.

'Can I bring up my children alone without my husband? I don't have enough mental strength to face life alone. All my energies have disappeared with him, and I cannot regain them. I am such a weakling.' Suddenly without any reason she would begin to laugh and speak half-aloud or half to herself.

Kusuma was speaking aloud even when no one was around. 'I am a stubborn woman. I don't listen to anyone. Perhaps they think that I can't live alone. I will prove them wrong. I can live all alone even if my husband has discarded me; my life will not end like this. I have immense self-confidence and determination. I have college degrees as well as intelligence. I can live by myself. I can bring up my children and make them able and happy. Don't underestimate me. In course of time, I shall prove my mettle to one and all. A woman is not all timid. I will prove that I am capable.'

This temporary elation would last only a few minutes. Immediately, like a deflated balloon, she would again sink into depression.

Her heart was like a broken mirror. Her husband was reflected on the many pieces of that mirror. Also she would hear the voice of U.G. whispering in her ears. His image appeared to grow bigger and bigger. She felt that someone was beckoning her and promising her solutions for her pains and sorrows. There was buzzing in her ears. She felt that someone was speaking to her. Who was it? The voice whispered: 'What are you waiting for? Your desire will be fulfilled soon. Go!' She made an instant decision: with Bujji in her arms she carried a small suitcase and walked fast out of the house.

An hour later, Kusuma was not found in her room. The child was also missing. People at home thought that she might have gone to visit an acquaintance. But she did not return. They searched for her everywhere. Her suitcase which she usually took with her on her journeys was also missing.

Kusuma went directly to the train station. Perhaps, it would be more appropriate to say that she was forcibly taken to the railway station as if she was possessed by an unknown power. After half an hour, the train for Madras arrived and she immediately boarded it without a ticket.

She got off at the Central Station in Madras. Across the street from the railway station, she got into a bus; but after a little while she got off it. She got into another bus and finally arrived at the house of an old acquaintance. She did not tell them why she had come. After a brief stay with them, she arrived at Kamat's house in Adyar. He was about to go out of the house at that time. He was surprised at her unexpected arrival.

'When did you come, Kusuma? What do need?' he enquired.

'I've come here for my husband. I've come to know he's here.'

'Who, U.G?' asked Kamat with a surprise look.

'Yes.'

'But I heard that U.G. is abroad now. When did he return? Who told you?' asked Kamat unable to believe her words.

'Some unknown man informed me that he is here in Madras. I am looking for him. If he comes to Madras, he definitely comes to see you,' said Kusuma innocently. The way in which she said these words and her looks led Kamat to suspect that she was mentally ill. He silently gazed at her, not knowing what to say. He spoke to her in a comforting tone assuring her that he would let her know if he came.

Kusuma left the place hurriedly and visited some other acquaintances of U.G. in Adyar. That evening she went to the Dasaprakash Hotel and enquired about U.G. Later she went to the residence of Y.V. Rao, the Telugu move director and old friend of U.G. She had no news of U.G. there either.

She started looking for U.G. on the streets of Madras. All of a sudden, she imagined that she saw U.G. a little distance away from her and rushed to meet him. But there was no one there. How could he disappear? Thus she walked along many streets in search of U.G.

As luck would have it, one of her relatives, Kruttiventi Harinath, passed by her in a car. He was then employed in the Vahini Studios. He stopped the car and enquired why Kusuma was walking along with her son Bujji on the roadside like a forlorn woman. She appeared very tired and shabby with sunken eyes and unsteady looks. He could understand her plight.

Harinath took her in his car to his residence. Kusuma had hoped that U.G. was with him. She stayed in his house for two days. Everyone in the household comforted her. Then Harinath bought her a ticket to Poolla and put her on the train. He wrote a letter to Ratnamma stating her condition. Kusuma went back to Poolla.

A little while after she had returned, Kusuma felt that she was relieved of some sort of intoxication. When asked why she had gone on her own without notice, she said in a feeble voice, 'I did not go on my own. Someone directed me, followed me and took me to Madras. He definitely knew that my husband was in Madras.'

'What a fool you are, my dear? He deserted you long ago. How could you be so foolish?' said Ratnamma. She bitterly criticized U.G. for causing all this anguish to her daughter.

Kusuma suddenly became alert and angry. She shouted emotionally, threatening: 'I cannot tolerate any sly remarks against my husband. He never spoke ill of any of you. He had sterling qualities. My times are bad. My fate is cruel. Don't you dare say anything bad about him in his absence!' Everyone was taken aback.

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Kusuma was dragging on her days heavily enduring all the agonies of her heart. Her mental condition oscillated drastically. Sometimes she laughed and moved cheerfully about in the house singing songs jovially like a normal person. At other times her behavior was odd and eccentric. She would sit in a corner silently and brood over different past happy incidents in her life. The agonizing memories were innumerable and they suffocated her again and again. She would struggle with those memories. Then she would get tired and slip into a stupor. Sleep was a blessing.

Unfortunately her children were not always sympathetic. 'The children made it a point to wound my heart with harsh words. My own children are behaving like born enemies. They think that I am primarily responsible for their disorderly lives. They are accusing me for selling away various gold ornaments which would otherwise have been theirs.'

Bharati blamed her mother for preventing the two daughters from going to America. Kusuma bore silently the accusations of her daughter. Usha was silent and supple. By nature she was timid and naturally Bharati dominated her.

The poor children were not fortunate to enjoy the affection of their father. He was touring different countries and rarely stayed with them. They had to depend upon the mercy of others who cared little for their happy upbringing. No one attended to their growing needs beyond providing food and shelter. Their lives became hollow and discordant. They carried that emotional and psychological baggage on their heads all their lives, never to be disburdened. They were condemned to an unknown and uncertain future. They lived like shadows among relatives facing humiliations and were choked by frustrations and bitter resentments.

Bharati was always ready with her complaints: 'Have you ever really thought about our welfare? You only think of yourself. We are all victims of your fancies. You left us in the gutters.' Bharati was pungent in her criticism of her father too: 'Even my father cannot be forgiven for his role. He lived his life indulging himself recklessly and went into voluntary exile. The clash between our parents ended up in our miserable way of living like orphans. Once a rich man's daughters, we are now begging for the mercy of others.'

Kusuma had so far been patiently tolerating Bharati's sarcastic remarks; but when she heard her words of disrespect for her father, she pounced on her and slashed at her, 'You can blame me as much as you please; I can tolerate. But if you raise as much as a little finger against your father, I shall tear you to pieces.' People around were terrified by her outburst. Usha shuddered in fear. Later, Kusuma darted into her room and closed the door behind her. After two days, Bharati left for Visakhapatnam to resume her studies.

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One day, Kusuma went alone to Poolla railway station to take a train to Eluru to see her friend Chittemma. The train was running late and she had to wait in the waiting room. The platform was not crowded. A distant relative of hers happened to notice her in the waiting room. He was a doctor, practicing in another town. He knew of her broken family life and her mental imbalance.

He sneaked into the waiting room and pried on her saying, 'Where are you going, Kusuma? How are things?' He sat on the chair next to her. 'To Eluru,' she replied. A casual conversation followed. She felt a little solace in his kind words. She expressed her problems to him in detail without reserve. He read her differently. Slowly he moved closer to her and laid his hand on her shoulder softly. At that moment she was a little absent-minded. Suddenly she became alert and shuddered. She stood up and started shouting at him at the top of her voice.

'How could you have the temerity to lay your dirty hands on me? Do I look so cheap to you, rascal? Have you lost your senses and propriety? If you linger here for another moment, I will trample you under my feet. Get out of my sight, you scoundrel!'

Kusuma shouted at him like a possessed woman. Hearing her hysterical yelling, all the passengers and others gathered around them. The doctor never expected such a violent reaction

from her. He immediately fled for his life trying to cover his face with his hand bag. Meanwhile, the bell rang announcing the arrival of the train. She postponed her journey and returned home as her self-respect had taken a blow.

Upon seeing her daughter in a sullen, gloomy and dazed condition, Ratnamma enquired, 'What happened? Why did you come back?'

Kusuma perched on a chair and bellowed several hot breaths in desparation. She recovered and slowly related the whole incident in seething anger: 'Inform his family of this. Let that dirty creature pay the price!' she screamed.

Ratnamma opened her mouth widely, raised her index finger to her mouth as a sign of caution and replied with pity in her voice: 'No, we'll do nothing of the sort. People are like crows. They would caw and distort and exaggerate things. Many twisted tongues will speak all kinds of nasty things.'

Kusuma sat motionless. What her mother thought was also true. Kusuma had never before experienced this sort of mortification. A creeping nausea ran through her body. She ran to the bathroom, had a bath and changed her "dirtied" clothes. Now she began to feel that her beauty was the bane of her life.

This unexpected incident was indelibly engraved upon her psyche. She was plunged headlong into self-pity and self-loathing. 'I am disgusted with this miserable life. How can I escape this mental torment and torture? I lost my will to live. Why should I live? For whose sake? Only death can relieve me of all this misery. Nothing but void surrounds me. I am all alone and utterly lonely. Instead of this hollowed life, is it not better to die?' Such were her everyday thoughts. She was caught up in a feeling of total helplessness and despondency.

To escape from the repetitive thinking process, she tried to induce some confidence in herself. Then she would temporarily regain her calm and her mind would become sane and serene. After a lapse of a few hours, however, she could not make up her mind; and an element of incredulity would creep in all of a sudden. All her blooming aspirations and hopes would vanish and she would mentally collapse. This phase of her life was on and off.

When she was in high spirits she would take a bold decision to move to Eluru and start a tutorial college there, live independently and open a new chapter in her life. She contacted a few people toward this end. They were ready to help her. But in the last moment she would back off. People who had wanted to help her wondered at her fickle-mindedness.

One day, she decided to go to Eluru along with Bujji. She arrived in Eluru by train and slowly ambled toward an acquaintance's house. After fifteen minutes, she had a feeling that she was sinking into a bottomless pit. Acute anxiety tugged her mind. Somehow she dragged her feet and after a while she stood still. 'No, I can't walk any more; let me go back to Poolla. The time is not right,' thus thinking she turned around and started walking back to the train station. After a few minutes, again she decided to go ahead with her previous plan. She trudged bravely a few steps forward but she lost her courage and her legs faltered. An icy shiver of fear spread through her, followed by a reeling sensation in her head. Her vision was blurred. There was total darkness before her eyes. She felt that death knocked at her door. She lost her balance, fell down and lost her consciousness.

Noticing the fall of his mother, Bujji was bewildered. He began to cry tapping his mother with his tiny hands. Passersby flocked around. Someone thought that it was an epileptic fit; a bunch

of iron keys were placed in her palm to help her regain consciousness. Two buckets of water was poured on her but in vain. An elderly gentleman who was passing by in his car stopped and enquired about the scene.

He came out of his car and pushed forward to observe the lady. He was shocked to notice it was his own relative and recruited the help of people to take her to a hospital. He took care of Bujji while she was carried into the car. He took her to the hospital for immediate medical care which he promptly found. After half an hour, Kusuma became conscious and she looked around for her son.

'When I started at Poolla, I was all right. But after coming to Eluru, I had a reeling sensation in my head and suddenly I fell down,' Kusuma explained. The doctors who examined her advised complete physical rest under medical care. After Kusuma regained enough strength, the gentleman brought her and Bujji in his car to Poolla. Ratnamma was shocked; she exclaimed, 'Where did you find her? We've been searching for her since morning.'

The gentleman scolded Ratnamma: 'Knowing her mental condition, how could you leave her alone and let her go out? I was extremely pained to see her lying unconscious on the roadside like an orphan. Luckily I happened to notice her.'

Ratnamma answered, lowering her head, 'She does not listen to anyone. In a fraction of a second, she hoodwinks us and disappears, leaving no trace of her movements. We are getting vexed with her.' The gentleman said after a brief pause, 'Well, if you feel she is really a burden, I will take her with me and look after her along with my daughters. She is very sensitive and emotionally disturbed; one must pay due attention to her. To add to the problem, she is a mother with responsibilities.'

Ratnamma felt ashamed and gently replied 'No, no. From now on we will take better care of her. This won't happen again, I assure you. I know your affection for Kusuma. I'm grateful indeed for your generosity.'

The gentleman nodded his head approvingly and had a brief talk with Kusuma before he left. He advised Ratnamma: 'Please write to your son Seshagiri Rao and take his advice.' He looked at Usha and said to her, 'Take care of your mother. I'll keep in touch with you from time to time.' The gentleman was Mantrapragada Satyanarayana, an eminent lawyer in Eluru.

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After a month, another incident happened. A very close relative of Kusuma prepared a lengthy letter criticizing U.G. for deserting his family. He came to Kusuma to show her the letter which appeared to be sympathetic to her.

At that time, Kusuma finished Bujji's bath and was dressing him. The relative talked to her casually for a few minutes and added, 'Kusuma, your husband has cruelly deserted you and has gone away without showing any remorse. I wrote a long letter admonishing him about what he has done. I thought that I should show it to you before mailing it. Please read it.' He handed the letter to her and sat on a chair.

She read the letter. Her facial expressions changed rapidly as she was reading. He was expecting approval from her. She stood up and, looking at him fiercely, picked up his chair with him perched on it with both her hands and carried it a few yards. As she threw him down with the chair, he screamed, 'What're you doing?' Before he completed the words, he fell down flat on the ground. There was a large bump on his forehead. He was terrified.

She roared like a wounded tigress, 'How dare you criticize my husband? What do you know about him? No one is fit to point a finger at him. How did you imagine that I would congratulate you for your letter? You should know your limits!'

Those who saw the incident could not imagine how her frail feminine body could display such superhuman strength to throw a man along with the chair on the ground.

Later she commented to her sister: 'No one can read "his" true personality. He has such sterling qualities; he is genuine, kind, sympathetic and considerate; and he is never selfish. I am suffering now because of my past accumulated misdeeds. May be he too is down now and is passing through a critical phase of his life. Who knows! People blame him without knowing his inherent qualities. Only a true wife worth to her salt could understand him. One day, he will certainly come back to me. I am sure of it. I will then live the rest of my life with our children in his shade happily.'

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In spite of her irrevocable faith in U.G.'s return some day, she nevertheless had lurking doubts. She wondered about how she could bring him back to India. As time passed, she started to abhor the atmosphere of her household. The neighbors' behavior exasperated her. She spent her time in a cocooned world of her own.

Her one and only aspiration was to get U.G. back at any cost and by any means. She wrote several supplicant letters expecting naively a soothing response from him. She hoped that somewhere along the line there might be a rapprochement by some stroke of luck. But she never received a reply. Then she wrote letters cursing her fate and threatening to commit suicide. Still there was no reply. Her only relief was in the writing of those letters.

She was dangling between the tenuous borders of sanity and insanity. One day, all of a sudden, a weird feeling crept in and overpowered her. An acute and diffused mental imbalance paralyzed her. Ratnamma was frightened; vague fears crossed her mind; she felt that a crisis was at hand. She thought her daughter was afflicted with an irreparable misfortune dealt by evil forces. She wrote a long letter to her son, Dr. Seshagiri Rao, informing him in detail of what had been happening.

Dr. Seshagiri Rao came to Poolla and observed her mental condition. He was appalled and alarmed. He immediately took her to Visakhapatnam and admitted her in the mental hospital there.

46. The London Scene

People from India, Pakistan, Ceylon and other countries met from time to time at the Commonwealth Club in London and discussed political, economic and social conditions. U.G. participated actively in those discussions. He was considered an authority on many such topics. Along with his rational skills, his modicum of knowledge of palmistry was an added attraction, although it was only a hobby for him. He had cordial relations with all, particularly with Pakistanis. He often visited their homes.

While in London, U.G. was unemployed; he had neither aim nor aspiration. He spent time like a displaced person. To him only the present mattered; the past was irrelevant.

One evening, he roamed about till late in the night and returned to his flat in Cadogan Square in the Knightsbridge area. He refreshed himself and prepared his dinner. He did not feel very hungry and began to browse through the *Time* magazine. The doorbell rang. U.G. tried to guess who the visitor might be at that hour. He opened the door. A British stranger was standing at the door. A strong uneasiness overtook him. 'Could you give me shelter for the night?' the stranger beseeched in a low voice. U.G. replied, 'Yes, please come in,' in a soft voice and extended his hand to him. The stranger breathed a sense of relief.

Who was this man? Why did he choose this particular house? U.G. was surprised at this unexpected visitor, but he did not think it was approrpiate to enquire about his antecedents or ask the reason for his request. He spoke to him in a friendly manner, 'Please relax while I will prepare the dinner.'

The visitor looked around the flat intently. He was agitated and disturbed; he breathed heavily and trembled like an animal trying to escape from a hunter. But he tried to conceal his emotion. He gazed at the window anxiously. Finally he felt that he could safely relax for the night.

He might be about thirty- or thirty-five-years-old, very tall, with a broad chest and a strong body. His hair color clashed with his pink skin and his deep blue eyes were weary. His dress was soiled, his hair was shabby, and his chin was unshaven for a number of days. He looked tired. Needless to say that he was hungry.

U.G. prepared the food and invited the visitor for the meal. The visitor sat at the table. They had a perfunctory conversation. Being hungry, the man ate eagerly. He appreciated U.G.'s hospitality. U.G. bade him good night and turned the lights off. As he was exhausted, the visitor fell asleep instantly.

After a few hours of sound sleep he suddenly got up as if he was woken up by someone. U.G. was sleeping in the next room peacefully. Uneasiness did not allow the visitor to sleep more. He was restless and he lay in the bed, closing his eyes.

In the early hours of the day, the visitor got up and got ready to leave the room. U.G. woke up and served him a cup of hot coffee. The visitor appreciated his gesture and said, 'Sir, many thanks for your hospitality. Even though you didn't know who I was, you have received me cordially and given me shelter for the night. I am indeed grateful to you. Goodbye.' He shook hands with U.G. and left the flat.

The next day, while browsing the local newspaper, U.G. was surprised to notice the photograph of the stranger who had stayed with him two nights ago. Details of that person were mentioned underneath the photo. He was a notorious murderer who was on the run. He was being pursued by the police and accidentally found U.G.'s place that night and took shelter there. That morning, while he was still at large trying to hide himself, the police laid a trap for him and caught him. They questioned him about his whereabouts the previous night but he didn't reveal. Had he done so, U.G. would have had to answer to the landlord as well as to the police for his actions.

U.G. learned something interesting from that night's experience. Professional criminals too have certain morals and principles. The man never disclosed his whereabouts that night, in spite of police torture; he did not bite the hand that fed him. U.G. admired the criminal's loyalty and integrity.

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U.G. had no income and with the meager money he had left he could not stay in the flat for long. So he moved to another hotel. Somehow he managed to survive.

He sometimes received help from unexpected quarters mysteriously. Pantulu had a brother by name Balaramaiah. Balaramaiah's grandson, Dr. Machiraju Venkataramana, was a practicing physician in London. He knew well about U.G.'s rich lifestyle He learned that U.G. had lost everything and was adrift in London severed from his family. The doctor had a fascination for U.G.'s personality as well as a soft corner for Kusuma. He came forward to help U.G. His weekly income as a doctor was eleven pounds and he offered to give five pounds out of it to U.G., although it would be hard for him to manage with the rest of the income.

Dr. Ramana visited U.G. in his hotel regularly once a week and gave him the money. One day, he advised U.G. to move to a cheaper hotel to save money. U.G. smiled at him and did not respond. He did not like to leave that hotel. He would rather pay the rent of two pounds per day for this hotel room, although he had no other source of income. The atmosphere there was good and everyday he saw a number of his old acquaintances there and they liked him.

He was entirely wrapped up in his own way of life, unconcerned about what might happen next. He seemed to have surrendered his will totally. He took life as it unfolded, one day at a time.

He visited the Commonwealth Club regularly. There he was in high demand. Some one or other invited him for lunch or dinner. He did not care whether he ate not on any particularly day. Hunger pangs never bothered him.

One day, as soon as he got up from his bed, he felt something missing in himself. In the body architecture an important organ was missing. What could that be? He examined all his limbs and found that every limb was where it should be, except that his head was missing. What a weird situation!

He moved his hand all over his head; he could touch it, but didn't feel it. Where had his head disappeared? Why? It was clearly visible, but he had no feeling of it!

The neurologists say that the brain has a total body image which is quite independent of what the eyes can see. The brain continues to send messages, they say, to the various parts of the body irrespective of whether a part is missing or not. In U.G.'s case, the brain changed its function mysteriously. Was it a serious neurological problem? Was it a hallucination? Or was it an acute mental disorder which makes existing things seem like they don't exist?

When U.G. looked into the mirror he saw the reflection of his head clearly. He moved his eyes, smacked his lips and took in long breaths; and with his fingers he twisted his nose and pinched his checks. Everything appeared normal. But he could not feel his head. He felt it was absent regardless of whether he closed his eyes or not.

U.G. moved his head left and right, upwards and downwards; he could see its movements in the mirror. But he had no consciousness of his head. While he had no experience of his head, his thinking was in tact. How could he still have thoughts? Were they coming from inside his head or from outside? What, in this case, constitutes inside and what outside? Why did the traditional religious teachers ask to control the onrush of thoughts?

Otherwise, he carried on with everything normally – sleeping, eating, laughing, talking, hearing and such. Yet he had no feeling of his head. He did not know how he looked to others. He was sure it was quite visible to others. He was not uncomfortable. Was this a momentary aberration or was it a permanent change? Slowly he became accustomed to the "headless" syndrome. In course of time, he stopped paying attention to it.

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47. Final Meeting with Krishnaji

L.V. Bhave wrote a letter to U.G. from Bombay: 'In the month of March, Krishnaji stayed for a few days in Himmat Nivas there. Time and again he remembered you and he seemed anxious to meet you. He made detailed enquires about your son's health. He remembered your wife also. I informed him that you are in London. He is coming there in the month of May. Please meet him without fail. Good luck to you.'

In May 1961, Krishnaji arrived in London. Miss Doris Pratt rented a house for him at 19, Inner Park Road, in the Wimbledon area. The neighboring Kenneth Black Memorial Hall was arranged for his discourses. Krishnaji was expected to address selected invitees there. His close associates were already there. For the first time, his speeches were going to be recorded while he spoke into a microphone.

U.G. talked to Krishnaji over the phone and was invited to meet him immediately. U.G. reached Wimbledon. Krishnaji's lodge was in a gated building. U.G. informed the person at the gate that he would like to meet Krishnaji. 'I don't think it's possible. He is resting and he won't see anyone now. If you wish to see him you can try to attend his talks,' he was told.

U.G. wrote his name on a piece of paper and said, 'Kindly do me a favor. Please pass this on to him. If he likes to see me, I will; if not, I will go back.' The man went in with the slip and a few minutes later he returned with a surprised look: 'Sir, Krishnaji wants to see you. You can go inside.' U.G. smiled in response and went inside.

Krishnaji was all alone in his room, resting. On hearing the footsteps he turned to look at U.G., standing there with a smile. As soon as Krishnaji got up U.G. greeted him.

'How are you, my old boy?' enquired Krishnaji smiling sweetly, showing the sofa before him for U.G. to sit. The two had a casual talk for a few minutes. Krishnaji looked at U.G., sharply examining him. It was not a pleasant sight.

Krishnaji got up from the sofa and suggested, 'Why don't we have a walk together toward Richmond Park?' 'Okay, as you wish.' As they were walking, it suddenly began to rain and they returned to the lodge. They sat before the hearth and warmed themselves up. After a little while, Krishnaji adjusted the logs in the fireplace to freshen the fire.

Krishnaji sat in *padmasana*. There was tremendous silence in the room. U.G., who had been intolerant of the enigmatic silence of Krishnaji on previous encounters, was also quiet. After a long pause Krishnaji probed, 'Well, U.G., how is your son? I learned that he is now able to walk. Indeed, I am delighted to know that.'

'The treatment in America has yielded wonderful results. In fact, it's a miracle of some sort. Now my son is able to walk by himself without any support. Even a mountain of praise does not do enough justice to modern medical technology. The interesting thing is that not a single dollar was spent for his treatment,' U.G. replied on a happy note.

Krishnaji nodded his head in appreciation and enquired, 'How is Kusuma? How are your other children – the most adorable tiny tots?'

U.G.'s face all of sudden wore a sullen look as it was a question he wanted to avoid. Krishnaji could read his facial expression. 'Has something gone wrong? What are you doing here at present? You seem to have changed a lot.' U.G. kept silent.

Krishnaji continued again, 'You're almost beyond recognition. What happened? You look crushed and tired. How is your health? Why are you staying here? Why don't you go back to India?'

At last U.G. spoke feebly, 'Under the present circumstances, I cannot go back to India. It's true, I must confess, that my fate is linked to my nomadic way of life. It does not suit my nature to stick to one place.' He stopped for a moment, pondered for a while, undecided what to say. In a strange voice he continued, 'There is no avocation for me either in London or throughout the length and breadth of the United Kingdom or anywhere else. I don't have a destination or a specific goal or aim to achieve in my life. Here, somehow I am passing my time. Nevertheless, it's not possible for me to go back to India.'

'Why have you come to such a drastic decision?' Krishnaji peered into U.G.'s bleary eyes.

Some vexatious thoughts flashed through U.G.'s mind. He said, 'Krishnaji, for various reasons I have detached myself from my family responsibilities. If I go to India they will all flock around me. I don't like to be dragged back into that rut. It's beyond me.'

Krishnaji thought of Kusuma and the children for a while and said, 'U.G., in my view it would be better for you to go back to India. If your family members come and disturb you, turn them out firmly. You can stay alone as you please.'

U.G. smiled within himself at this strange advice of Krishnaji. He looked straight into his eyes and said, 'Krishnaji, have you ever had any family responsibilities? Do you know the myriad entanglements in a family life? I wonder,' he said.

Krishnaji sat stern and motionless. After a long pause, he probed further: 'Why have you dissociated yourself from your family?'

U.G. kept quiet. How could he explain the internal turmoil he had been going through? Could he say that he had been dethroned from his fabulous wealth which is now reduced to a cinder? Could he explain tangibly how his family uprooted him from a pedestal?

U.G. heaved a big sigh: 'Well, to tell you the truth, I did not willfully try to detach myself from my family life. Somewhere along the line, I have meandered from the main stream. Certain circumstances conspired and everything went off the track and could not be retrieved. I feel as if nothing is under my control. I find myself in detached

isolation. I want to be left alone to fight my own battles. Let me live and sing my song,' he said emphatically.

He added, 'Physically I may look worn out but mentally I'm strong.' He seemed to revel in being spiritually rebellious. Krishnaji was touched by his words. No wonder there were tears in his eyes. He closed his eyes for a second and sympathetically asked, 'U.G., shall we examine the circumstances which led to the breakup of your family?'

Till then, U.G. was patiently answering Krishnaji by unbosoming his heart. Now he suddenly got irritated at Krishnaji's suggestion. He loathed putting his personal affairs under a microscope and logically examining them. Moreover, he had an aversion to being preached to.

'Krishnaji, sorry, I haven't come to you now to discuss my family matters with you analytically. I always believe that personal problems cannot be solved by sermons or soothing words. Bhave wrote to me that you wanted to see me. I came to you since he also added that you were eager to know about my son's medical treatment.' He added, 'There is a Telugu proverb which says that "One chants the same *mantra* to avoid a thunderbolt as well as to beg for alms."[91] You seem to have the same *mantra* or medicine for all problems.' He went on, 'Krishnaji, you know me and my background well. Perhaps you may never be able to understand my point of view. There is no bridge between you and me in spiritual matters. I never looked for consolation from any quarter. If I have problems I will sort them out myself. Please leave me alone. I am thankful to you for your valuable time. Good bye,' so saying U.G. got up from his seat to leave.

Krishnaji understood that U.G. was upset. 'Please wait. From tomorrow I'm going to give twelve talks in the Wimbledon Common Hall. They will be recorded for the first time. The audience consists of special invitees only. Please come and attend them,' he said and got up from his seat.

Wrapped up in his own thoughts, U.G. remained silent. He did not care to attend the talks, but he agreed reluctantly. He took leave of Krishnaji and ambled out slowly.

Next day, U.G. attended Krishnaji's first talk sitting in the front row along with distinguished guests. He got bored within a short time. But he patiently stayed on till the end.

After the first talk, Krishnaji sent for U.G. U.G. was ushered into a separate room. On seeing him, Krishnaji asked, 'What did you think of my talk? Could you make any sense of it?' U.G. replied, 'You are as elusive as ever.'

Krishnaji was silent. He wanted to see if his talk had any effect on him. U.G. attended two more of his talks. The third day Krishnaji again solicited U.G.'s opinion: 'How do you feel about the talks?' U. G. answered: 'Well, thousands of listeners have been following wherever you go to listen to your talks. Do you know that there is a joke about them? They introduce themselves to others saying that some of them belong to the Twenty-year Club while the others to the Thirty-year Club. Both U.G. and

Krishnaji smiled looking at each other. Krishnaji said, 'Come on U.G., you are too smart for me to handle.'

U.G. added, 'Apart from the joke, one thing is quite clear: though they have been listening to you for so many years, there is no noticeable change in them. Perhaps there will never be any.' Krishnaji was unruffled.

In May 1961, U.G. met Krishnaji for the last time to take leave of him. The curtain dropped. The bond between them came to an end. On 17th July Krishnaji left London for Ojai, California.

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U.G. came to know that John Coats was in London. Coats played a pivotal role in the Theosophical Society in Madras. After rejuvenating the World Federation of Young Theosophists, he was its president for a number of years. It was during those times that he had been acquainted with U.G. During 1941-46, he was the Chief Secretary of the English Section of the Theosophical Society. In 1959, he was elected the President of the European Federation. He was here in London in that capacity. One day, U.G. went to see him at his residence.

At that time, Raja Ratnem of Ceylon, a staunch Theosophist, also happened to be there. Once he had lived with U.G. in the same room in Adyar.

'You seem to have disappeared from the scene for several years. I learned that your American trip has yielded fruitful results. I'm happy to know indeed that your son is cured,' said Coats. U.G. smiled, 'Yes, my son is on his own legs.'

Later, the three of them had discussions on different issues. Their discussions centered on the principles of the Theosophical Society. As usual U.G. tore apart the Society.

'The Universal Brotherhood of humanity, the study of comparative religions and philosophy are a big hoax, nothing but a fool's paradise. No tangible results will be achieved even in a thousand years. You cannot bring a monumental change in men by way of preaching or teaching. Theosophical Society is now only a pastime for people.' He added, 'After the presiding deity in the temple (meaning Krishnaji) is no longer there, what is the use of the flag staff?' U.G. criticized the Society in a tone of deep contempt and biting irony.

Raja Ratnem was in a state of agitation, as if he had witnessed the most unpleasant encounter. But he kept silent. Later the discussion turned around Krishnaji and his philosophy. U.G., like a raged bull, attacked him without hesitation.

'All his utterances are mere repetitions and replay of gramaphone records. No one is benefited by his line of thought. It is his own grandiose delusion that by his mission the world will be uplifted. All his philosophy is will-o'-the-wisp. Nothing is clear-cut; it's a slippery and mossy floor. He skillfully evades essential issues. All his talks are an exercise in futility.'

As U.G. was leaving after bidding goodbye, Coats thrust some money into U.G.'s hand and closed his fist. U.G. was surprised, but his eyes glistened thankfully. Coats was a soul of kindness and the essence of courtesy. U.G. strolled away.

After U.G. left, Raja Ratnem exclaimed in derision, 'Coats, I wonder why you've kept mum while U.G. was slashing the very foundations of our Society. Why haven't you repudiated him? He is insufferably arrogant. He decries everything. In my view, he is an expert in the art of imitation. He is imitating Krishnaji in every respect. The influence of Krishnaji on him is obvious, whether it is in expression, style of talk, gait or gestures. He blindly criticizes everything under the sun. He might be deriving a great satisfaction demolishing everything.' Raja Ratnem added, 'He left his family in a condition of misery beyond words. In fact, I met his wife; she looked mentally deranged, a victim of his iconoclastic idiosyncrasies. What a cynic and skeptic he is!'

Coats remained silent and seemed untouched by Raja Ratnem's words. He pondered a while, closing his eyes. He had a poignant recollection of the bygone golden era of U.G.'s life. After a while, he opened his eyes and raised his brows and spoke: 'Yes, Raja Ratnem, you may call him fickle, volatile, inconsistent, cynical, and so forth. We may not agree with his radical way of thinking. But his innovative thinking is something praiseworthy. His simplicity, his childlike candor and infinite capacity for logic are astonishing. He is not arguing blindly for the sake of argument to win over others. I think he has a vision of his own. That's why he rejects everything. And his intellectual robustness and his total commitment to his own convictions are laudable. He is an enemy of false pretensions.' Coats's tone was rich with conciliation and concession.

Raja Ratnem was astonished by Coats's interpretation of U.G.'s inner depths.

Coats continued: 'Yes, it's true that he is egotistic. But that's his manner. He must have cloaked over his misfortunes. It is my duty to extend a helping hand when he is in dire straits. I'll never forgive myself, if I don't help him. There is some truth in what you said about U.G. imitating Krishnaji. How could it be otherwise? In spite of his criticism of Krishnaji and his philosophy, U.G. still respects him. We may differ with Krishnaji, but there is a direct or indirect influence of Krishnaji over every one of us.'

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That day the Commonwealth Club was in full attendance. Some celebration was in the offing. A group of people, mostly Pakistanis, were waiting for the arrival of U.G. He was to come at 5 O'clock. Zaheer, who came to London from Lahore, was curious to know why they were all waiting for him. He asked Shoab next to him. Shoab replied, 'After several encounters with this man it dawned upon us that his friendship is invaluable to all of us. He is a true example of the inestimable boon of rare friendship.' Meanwhile U.G. came running and someone introduced him to Zaheer. After half an hour of talking, Zaheer became fascinated by U.G. The next day he invited U.G. for dinner.

48. The Fate Rumblings of Juggernaut

The letter Kusuma had written from Poolla traveled to several places and finally reached U.G. after three months. He had read the letter carefully and replied to it. This is the last letter he wrote to her from London, England, on 30th December, 1961.

> I have received today on my return here your letter of 11th September 1961. It's quite obvious that I have failed to open your eyes and make you understand the reality of the situation. It hurts me to hear, from time to time, the suicide attempts of yours. But my detachment from you and my passive acquiescence to your actions is a solid piece of fact. It is not apathy. There isn't a whiff of apathy in me. The bonds of the family relationships have fallen away from me.
>
> I have thought long and hard about this matter. You know I am not the sort of person to be persuaded in these matters and I do not act on impulse. Let the marriage wither on the vine. Neither of us can bear to see the ravages of pain in the other. Let us prefer to cling to the memory of the past. You have not, perhaps, much of a sweet memory to live with or cling to. May be you have a lot of things to cry over. Yes, I am quite as mentally broken down as you are, but it manifests itself in a different way in me. In the past, I may have beaten you and used insulting language. All that is over, finished and done with now. If you feel the agony about me which you say in your letters you feel, I can well understand your feelings. I know you love me deeply. And I loved you dearly too in spite of our many bickerings and constant battles. But this 'broken wing fixation' will destroy you. You can't base your life on sentiment alone and that cannot be the basis of any marriage.
>
> We have known each other for eighteen years. It is impossible to forget the ties of eighteen years. Old habits and memories have a strange way of surviving. I can never forget you, and I know nothing else will ever equal my feelings for you in intensity. When we first met I liked you very much. That impression will continue, unchanged by anything that has happened since then. In the nature of things, it cannot be otherwise. The bond between us is the 'subtle inner force' which the Sanskrit poet says is the essence of love. It is not 'erotic sentiment'. What happened to 'the feeling that you feel when you have a feeling you never felt before'? I would not know. But we are now at the end of the tether. Tears and torments may have been your lot, but continued angry words, bitterness and rancor, however justified they may be, do not take us anywhere. This sustained nastiness for longer periods is neither desirable nor useful. Anger is a terrible corrosive. It may be advantageous to use 'blackmailing weapons', which is the chief ammunition in the arsenal of your family, and it may bring temporary relief to you, but in the long run it is our children who will suffer.
>
> We cannot blame anybody for the mess we have made in the lives of the young ones. I may have laid a harvest of woe for our children, and I know that it will be laid up at my door that I have left my own children bewildered, with nothing in life to look forward to but sadness. I do not see any reason why the things should be any more difficult than they have been. Your stubborn unwillingness to admit the facts of our situation is also responsible for the anguish of our situation.
>
> Why is it, with all the will in the world, I cannot understand what is so obvious to you? Well, anyway, I would rather let things go to the devil in their own way than try to go

back to the past. Since we get exactly what we ask for, no more and no less, there is no question of any atonement on my part for the way things have turned out. Everyone weaves his own destiny. If children take lamentable beatings of the cruel hand of fate, I am not wholly responsible. They are as much your children as they are mine. Let not the idea that I have left you or deserted you destitute and nameless bother you. You have your own name, your own degrees and your own properties. Why I acted the way I did and still act is difficult to grasp but if they are held up against the mirror of a peculiar interpretation of my own my actions show an unflawed logic of their own. For aught I know life may not run on logic. Whether it is right or wrong it in no way changes the harm of the situation. But there is nothing that I can do to change the course of events.

One more thought, postponing a problem of course is not to solve it. There is a way out of an unhappy marriage, when one partner breaks the law of discipline, the right accrues to the other of breaking the bond. The woman is not the husband's bonded slave but his companion and an actual partner and is as free as the husband to choose her own way of life. Since the new Hindu Code Bill provides divorce and legal separation, why don't you find some grounds either for divorce or for legal separation? That would save a lot of mental anguish. Do not for a moment think that I am asking you to do what I would not like to do myself. But, personally, it does not matter to me one way or the other.

There is nothing left to return to or keep me there in India. Be happy and stay happy. I wish you the best and the finest.

U.G. typed the letter and came out to mail it. He walked a little distance and dropped it a mailbox. He thought that he discharged his duty towards his wife properly under the present circumstances.

In fact, U.G. did not know then the whereabouts of his wife or her mental state at the time of her receiving his reply. By the time U.G.'s letter had arrived in Poolla, Kusuma was in the mental hospital in Visakhapatnam. She received the letter in the first week of January 1962. She read it minutely many times. The contents of his letter completely let her down further. She was disappointed, demoralized and crestfallen. She could not digest some of his rhetoric. She ruminated over parts of his letter such as, 'Since the new Hindu Code Bill provides for divorce, why don't you find out some ground either for divorce or for legal separation? That would save a lot of mental anguish.'

A sense of weakness and restlessness pervaded her. Deep emotions stirred in her mind. She sat as if lifeless, benumbed with humiliation. She remained still in a stupor with her arms dangling; everything in her mind became entwined with the skein of wounded memories of the past.

Her life seemed to be like a play within a play, a drama enacted by an unknown and invisible director, a play she was acting out for herself without an audience. "Divorce", "Divorce" – these words ringed in her cars. She started laughing bitterly.

'Yes, this is the reward, the high compliment he is offering after 18 years of married bondage! When I get a piece of paper with the divorce orders, will the bond of marriage come to an end? Ultimately even death cannot separate us. How could he know that I am happy when I am in this hospital for mad people of mentally deranged lives, the loony bin?'

She felt all of sudden an acute insecurity, the feeling of dread that she eventually would lose

him. It was unthinkable. She trembled before that unknown power which sucks her into a dark hole. She was mentally tired and she slept like a log.

* * * *

Of late, Kusuma lost her appetite. They had to hold her tightly onto her bed to administer medicines and feed her food. Sometimes her tantrums were beyond control. She deliberately vomited whatever was put into her mouth. By now she knew the contents of U.G.'s letter by heart. She began to laugh constantly and wag her head like a doll. She was full of suppressed wrath.

Since her mental condition was a cause of concern, they appointed an experienced nurse named Pankajam to take care of her. Strangely, Kusuma had a good rapport with her. She ventilated her suppressed feelings freely to her. On and off, she narrated her life story to her. Pankajam listened to Kusuma patiently and sympathized with her.

That day, Pankajam came in to attend to the morning chores. She helped her bathe, combed her hair and draped here sari. Kusuma was calm. She started chatting with Pankajam in a lighter vein. 'I appreciate your service to me and your patience. How long you have been working here? Is it not tough and boring to mingle with mentally sick people like me?' queried Kusuma.

For a moment Pankajam was taken aback. She said, 'My life is similar to yours. One day, my husband to whom I had clinged ditched me. Later, I came to know that he was living with another woman in Bombay and was never going to come back. I was shattered, depressed and demoralized. I wept inconsolably to the point of insanity and I wanted to end my life, as I adored him with every fiber of my being. I spent sleepless nights. If I committed suicide who would look after my three children? Then I decided to fight back. Why should I care for him if he had betrayed me and my kids? My will to survive took over. I sewed, I worked as a maid servant and my children sold vegetables to help us meet both ends. Some kind people took pity on my dire situation and helped me get into the nursing course. I struggled under abject poverty but never succumbed to pulls, pressures and temptations. I gathered new strength. I have been propelled by a strong will to get out of my despondency and dependency. I stopped thinking about my past. My past is dead. I became more attentive to my children. I fought a lonely battle with a commitment to educate my children. I now suffer from asthma. But my children focused their attention on their studies and came out successfully. Two of my sons got married. I have one daughter to be married; she is working as a school teacher. Soon I will perform her marriage and we are all living happily. The rest of my life will be peaceful and I am content.'

Kusuma was stunned by her life story. After a few moments, Pankajam proclaimed, 'My so-called husband did me a great favor. He brought out my innate capacity to rely on my own legs with confidence. In fact, I was reborn again.'

'Pankajam, your story is quite absorbing. I appreciate your gumption and guts.'

'Amma, I can gauge mad people's psychology like a trained police dog. Many people come here and stay for some time and leave. I don't know what their lives are like after that. I always wonder why people go mad. In my opinion most of them are not mad; they pretend to be mad to avoid unpleasant situations. They behave like mad people and deceive themselves as well as others around them. More over...' Pankajam stopped abruptly as a doctor came in along with some medical students for his rounds.

The doctor looked into Kusuma Kuamari's case-sheet and explained to the students her case in medical terms. They left after fifteen minutes and Pankajam followed them.

In the proximity of Pankajam Kusuma felt an air of enthusiasm. One day, Pankajam said to her, '*Amma*, in my view your children's welfare should be more important to you than your husband. You have to stand up boldly and free yourself from all entanglement with him.'

Pankajam's revelations and soothing words had a remedial effect on Kusuma's mind. They were more effective than the medications she was being given. The flames of agony in her heart began to subside. But a feeling of uncertainty haunted her and her bouts of depression resumed.

The doctors decided to administer to her electrical shock treatment three times a week. Kusuma protested vehemently, stating she was on the road to recovery except for a short relapse. She beseeched Pankajam to make the doctors stop this inhuman treatment.

'No, I'm afraid there's nothing I can do. It's beyond me. The superintendent has already talked to your doctor brother and your brother has agreed to it. You've to bear it. One *has* to go through this traumatic treatment. It will yield good results,' said Pankajam.

On a fateful Sunday, the treatment started amidst grisly yellings and agonizing yelpings, as if a caged animal was being brutally tortured. In course of time, Kusuma accepted her fate like a condemned prisoner for life.

Kusuma spent more than six months in the mental hospital. The shock treatments were discontinued after some improvement was noticed in her mental condition. Her behavior, however, changed drastically. She settled into a normal rhythm. Dr. Seshagiri Rao was informed of her recovery. She was declared mentally healthy and was discharged. At last, her stay at the mental hospital came to a happy ending.

She took leave of Pankajam and other inmates and left the mental asylum with her brother in his car, full of promise for her ongoing life-journey. A new chapter was to be opened.

Kusuma stepped into the outside world after a lapse of six or seven months. But colossal ill-luck hovered around her like a hungry bird of prey. When she came back to her brother's house, no one seemed to show much interest in her return. No emotional re-unions, no tears shed and no soothing words.

The domestic environment was not quite conducive to her full recovery. Her family members and friends tended to keep her at a distance. Even her daughter Bharati kept herself aloof. How could her close kith and kin desert her when she needed them the most?

She decided to go back to Poolla, her mother's place, in search of a fresh lease of life. Her brother arranged for her return and a trusted person accompanied her. Rao gave Kusuma a wad of currency bills for her spending.

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The sight of Kusuma was like a dream come true to Ratnamma; her face flushed with excitement and choked emotions. She laid both hands on Kusuma's shoulders and brought her inside the house. Vasant was agog to see his mother back; he gazed at her with the rapture of a devotee at a shrine. Bujji, the darling boy of the family, jumped with joy. His eyes searched his mother's face. He approached her rather shyly. Later Usha joined her brothers. Kusuma's

arrival was celebrated as a special event.

After a long grueling time Kusuma realized what freedom means and how valuable it is – freedom to live with her own kin without any restrictions. It was like passage from the dark dungeon of hell to the bright world of heaven. For sometime everything seemed to have been admirably settled and the omens prompted her to lead a peaceful life of her choice.

Slowly Kusuma began to realize that her calculations were mistaken. One day, she smelled that somewhere something went wrong in her day-to-day interactions with her neighbors and close relatives. She noticed clearly that people were deliberately keeping her at a distance in a subtle manner. She had a strong feeling that many of them were surreptitiously watching her all the time and that they would hear her conversations with their ears pressed to the wall or doors. She thought someone was watching her from some corner with their invisible presence. Who were they? Two or three times she rushed to catch them, but she never succeeded. How could they disappear so quickly? Was it a hallucination? She was unable to protect herself against this silent mental torture. She was dismayed and disturbed. But her fears were not unfounded. One day she overheard two people known to her talking about her and her husband. Even her mother was not an exception to this. Kusuma lost her faith in people. Extreme vulnerability of her sensitive nature left her ill-equipped to cope with the circumstances.

On the surface, she was leading her routine life normally. But inside, she was lonely, dispirited and distressed, and her mistrust of people was high. She tended to overreact to trivial incidents.

One day, Bujji went to a neighbor's house to play. He returned very late. When Kusuma asked him to eat his dinner the boy said that he had already eaten in the neighbor's house. Kusuma was taken aback. Bujji never skipped his meals at home. Why to day? Something went wrong somewhere. Of late, he had been behaving strangely. 'Did they offer you food on their own or have you asked for it?' she angrily questioned him. He kept quiet. She repeated the question. Still he did not respond. Again she thundered. Afraid of her mother's tone, he replied softly, 'I asked for it.'

'Why? What else did you say?' she asked him with a searching glance. Bujji innocently rolled his eyes and mumbled rather timidly, 'My mother did not give me dinner. Please give me food.' Her blood boiled in her veins, her face turned scarlet and wrath filled her. She felt a sense of humiliation. Her whole demeanor underwent a subtle change assuming an expression of indignation. 'Why, are you kidding me? Why did you tell a lie? Who prompted you to say it? Come on, tell me the truth. And what more did they ask you?'

'They asked me.... asked me how you behaved with people. I said nothing.... Nothing,' he stuttered. Kusuma shouted, 'Tell me the truth; if you don't, I'll tear you to pieces. You are hiding something. You said something, didn't you?'

Bujji shook his head denying. His silence provoked her. The boy demeaned her before the worthless neighbors. He begged them for food, saying that his mother did not feed him. She suspected that the neighbors pried Bujji for information about her behavior and her husband's whereabouts, luring him with some eatables.

Her wayward leaps of anger turned into a seething rage. Her hair bristled with a shiver of revenge. She turned her bloodshot eyes towards her helplessly standing son and rushed into the kitchen. She picked a large spoon, heated one end of it on live charcoal and scorched Bujji with it on his stomach. The boy cried in severe pain. Unmindful of his cries, once again she entered the kitchen to heat the spoon. She came out shouting, 'I'll kill you if you eat food in neighbors'

houses,' and once again scorched his stomach with the rear end of the spoon. The poor boy rolled on the ground helplessly and tried to protect himself by covering his stomach with his hands.

'No, no, mother, I won't eat there,' he yelled several times, writhing on the floor; yet her anger did not abate. As if she was possessed by some cruel force, she burned the tender skin of the child's stomach at seven different places.

Meanwhile Ratnamma tried to interfere but Kusuma screamed at her hysterically, 'It's none of your business; stay away. He is my son. I burn him and massacre him as I like. Who are you to interfere? You have no right. Don't poke your nose, keep out!' Ratnamma was petrified. Bujji yelled and shrieked, endlessly rolling on the ground with the unbearable scalding.

Ratnamma thought, 'O, God, perhaps her insanity is at its peak again. Only God can save my grandson.' Usha and Vasant were there watching the inhuman treatment of their kid brother. But they were helpless. They were in a state of stupefaction before their mother's wrath.

Slowly Kusuma's rage melted down like blocks of ice on heat. She sat motionless. She gazed at Bujji, wailing, moaning, swaying and shaking his body like a fish out of water, unattended by anyone. It was a pitiable situation. All of a sudden she burst into tears, tears of remorse and repentance. A sense of guilt overtook her. She was appalled by her own violent behavior; it was unthinkable! 'What made me overreact in such a beastly manner?' she asked herself. 'What have I done to my son, a defenseless kid? What's come over me! Have I become mad again?'

She ambled across to her son, took him in her hands, hugged him, cajoled him tenderly and applied a soothing balm on the burns. The suspicion that the neighbors were peeping into her disheveled life still lurked in her heart. On that day, the innocent child became a victim to it. After a few weeks his wounds healed, but the scars on his stomach would remain indelibly.

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Bharati came from Visakhapatnam to spend her holidays. She heard about the ghastly incident and reacted violently but kept quiet. She nurtured hatred towards her mother. In her day-to-day interactions, she stubbornly maintained a reticent manner.

One mid-day, everyone except Kusuma finished their lunch. At that moment, Kusuma came into the dinning room to eat. She asked Bharati to clean the soiled plates. Usha, who was also there, immediately offered to wash them, but Bharati stopped her. 'Why should we? Let her clean them herself. Be off. Don't touch them.' She roared with an angry voice. Usha was always afraid of her sister; she turned towards her mother with helpless and timid looks.

'What are you waiting for? Come on, let's go,' said Bharati forcefully and walked out taking Usha with her. Kusuma felt utterly humiliated by her own daughter. Tears rolled in her eyes. One of Kusuma's sisters was present at the time. She watched how the children treated their mother. She came forward, cleaned the dishes and set them before Kusuma. She consoled Kusuma and said that Bharati was just infantile and didn't probably bear any grudge against her.

After the holidays, Bharati left for Visakhapatnam. Before leaving she did not care to say goodbye to her mother. Little did she know that she was seeing her mother for the last time.

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For the past few days Kusuma had a fever; she became groggy and weak. It was 19th October 1962. Her fever was unabated. She had been using some native medicines, but to no avail. A local doctor attended on her. She was diagnosed as suffering from a viral attack. Her whole body ached as if pierced by needles. She was unable to eat solid food; she was fed barley soup.

On that day, a lizard on the wall made eerie sounds intermittently. Vultures hovered in the sky in a circular fashion under black clouds. In the night, a street dog who had always acted as a bodyguard to Kusuma all of a sudden started howling in a strange voice. Ratnamma went out and chased the dog away. The evil omens of an impending disaster haunted the house.

It was past eleven O'clock in the night. Sleep eluded Kusuma and she felt restless. She felt a need for her legs and hands to be massaged by someone to gain relief from the aches and pains. She was extremely thirsty. Slowly she ambled toward a jug of water, drank some water and returned to her bed. At last she fell asleep.

After midnight, she suddenly woke up as if some unknown force touched her body. She opened her eyes and could not move her limbs; she felt as if they were tied down. She had a feeling of acute thirst; her mouth and lips were dry. Her eyes were burning.

She searched for some drinking water in the room. The jug of water was moved onto a long bench at a distance. She tried to get up, but her body was not in her control. She had vertigo; she tried to hold on to the edge of the table to keep her balance, but she fell on the floor. Her neck hit the sharp edge of the table and her head bent sideways.

She screamed '*Amma*, *amma*...' Her shrill voice penetrated the walls of the room and was heard in the rest of the house. Everyone tried to open the door, but unfortunately it was bolted inside. Usha ran behind the room, broke the window open and opened the door.

Kusuma was seen lying on the floor between the door and the table like a corpse, groaning and moaning. They all came together and helped her sit up but could not put her back on the cot. Her body was too heavy to be carried. There were only two men in the household and they were old.

She gazed at the assembled people in a state of helplessness and was unable to move her limbs. She signed for water. Usha brought a glass of water but Kusuma could not hold the glass. She opened her mouth so that water could be poured directly into her mouth. Later, her mouth became twisted sideways like in a palsy patient.

She was in a state of a stupor, not a muscle in her face had any feeling, and her looks were mechanical. Her breathing was stertorous. Her whole body became numb. Usha rearranged her mother's disorderly clothes.

Vasant and Bujji were terrified to see their mother suffering. They started to cry. Ratnamma took them away and consoled them. 'Nothing has happened, she just fell. Don't cry. She'll be all right soon.'

Usha and Vasant went out to fetch their close relative Dr. Venkataramaiah. He came at once and examined her after he helped on to the bed. Kusuma's hands and legs were dangling like those of puppet. Observing that they had lost their sense of touch, the doctor concluded that probably her medulla oblongata was completely damaged.

He said, 'There's nothing more that can be done here; you must take her to Eluru for expert treatment. Any delay would be risky.'

Kusuma slept for a while, thanks to the pills the doctor gave. Ratnamma and Usha stood on her bedside till the early hours of the morning. Early morning, Dr.Venkataramaiah came, examined her and stayed with them.

In the morning Usha went to the local post office to contact her uncle Dr. Seshagiri Rao in Visakhapatnam on the phone. She could not get through. She waited for more than two hours to no avail. She tried to contact other relatives in Bezawada and Machilipatnam. She could contact Annapurnaiah, the brother-in-law of Dr. Seshagiri Rao, in Eluru.

'Usha, did you get hold of your uncle'? Ratnamma enquired anxiously after Usha returned home.

'No, all the lines were busy. I'll try again. How is mother?'

'Now, your mother has another problem: she can't ease herself; her urinary tract is probably blocked. All my efforts proved ineffective in inducing urination. What to do?' reported a worried Ratnamma. Usha went into her mother's room. After spending half an hour there Usha dashed once again to the post office to contact her uncle. After a number of agonizing attempts she could at last get through. She reported to him in detail the entire episode including the urinary tract problem. Her uncle advised her to make her mother sit in a tub of hot water to help her urinate. He also instructed her to move the patient to the Eluru Government Hospital as soon as possible. He told her that he was rushing to Eluru along with Bharati in his car and would see everyone there.

A person accompanying Dr. Venkataramaiah rushed to the nearby town Bhimadolu and hired a nurse to attend on Kusuma. She came and worked hard to successfully make Kusuma urinate at last. Later, an ambulance arrived from Bhimadolu to carry the patient to Eluru. Usha, another lady, a close relative, and Dr. Venkataramaiah accompanied Kusuma.

It was not a smooth ride to Eluru. Due to engine failure the vehicle moved slowly at a snail's pace. Though Kusuma's body was mostly out of function, her mind was still active; the will to survive at any cost dominated her being. By the time the ambulance arrived at the hospital her body had taken a heavy toll. The doctors thoroughly examined her, took some x-rays and confirmed the damage to her medulla oblongata. Her survival was in question. She was put on a drip. Meanwhile Usha and the relative went to an acquaintance's place in Eluru to have food and wait.

Dr. Seshagiri Rao left Visakhapatnam in his car with Bharati. On their way, there was a downpour of rain; so they had to travel cautiously and slowly.

Kusuma lay on the bed. She became delirious and started to mumble some words aloud. The nurse immediately reported it to the doctors. They came and examined her. They declared that she probably went into coma vigil.

In her semi-conscious state, she was traveling alone, whether it was by air or on the ground, she did not know. But the journey continued toward an unknown destination. It came to a sudden halt and she was ushered into a timeless zone. A number of mysterious bodiless apparitions conversed among themselves in a low voice. 'At last, she has arrived home. She is very tired and needs total rest.' The atmosphere was cool, calm and peaceful. What a relief! She felt it was like rebirth and she wished to remain there. She had no memories of the past; everything was a void, but a blissful void.

Her bliss was rudely disturbed by the nurse who came to give her an injection. Kusuma opened her eyes, her eyelids unsteady. She gazed at the people in the hospital. Her looks were distant as if she did not see the people, as if they did not exist.

'Where am I? Who am I? Where did I come from?' Slowly reality dawned on her. 'Yes, I am on the death bed. The time is ticking away on the dial of death. The messenger of Death came and conveyed His cold message, the message of a swan song, a dreadful dirge!'

A little distance from the hospital, the radio was playing a Hindi threnody of Mukesh in a low but sad voice:

Aa, loutke aaja mere meet
Tujhe mere geet bula rahiye
Ek pal hasna ek pal rona
Kaisa hai e jivan ka khela
Ek pal milna ek pal bichadna
Ye duniya do din ka mela'.

(Come back my darling,
The song of my life is
beckoning you
Again and again.
The game of life is
Laughing one moment
And crying the next.
We come together one moment
And break up in the next.
Life in this world
Is but a brief carnival
of a day or two.)

Meanwhile, Usha and the relative rushed to the hospital. Usha stood before her mother watching. Kusuma continued to open and close her eyes involuntarily. Her hollow eyes mirrored Usha but she didn't recognize her. After a while, Kusuma's eyes closed for the last time. Her head tilted slightly. There was a blanket of darkness before

her eyes. She lost her consciousness. At last, she was released from the thralldom of devastating emotions, mental distress and agonizing struggle. All her dues were settled once and for all.

An entity named Kusuma played her tragic role on the universal stage and made her exit. The soul of Kusuma Kumari at last attained its eternal peace from the tragic vortex of circumstances.

The secretary of the great palmist Chiro in Chicago predicted in 1959 that Kusuma would have an untimely death. The prediction came true in 1962.

Usha thought her mother was asleep. Later the doctor came, examined Kusuma and declared her dead. Usha never expected that her mother would die so soon. Tears flooded in her eyes. She wept loudly. The relative took her into her bosom and solaced her. Now Usha was a motherless child.

The hospital staff required the body to be removed. The body was placed in the corner of a verandah and covered with a blanket for the time being. Under a big banyan tree, Usha, her relative, Dr. Venkataramaiah and Annapurnaiah waited the arrival of Dr. Seshagiri Rao.

There were many birds living on the tree. All of sudden, a dead crow fell from the sky. A number of crows soon surrounded the crumpled dead crow and started clamoring sorrowfully for half an hour. At the time of sunset, all the crows left the place screeching.

The dead body was then moved to the mortuary. It was the only body in the dark room and it looked like an unclaimed penniless wastrel.

Usha and her relative went to their host's place and spent the night there. Early in the morning, they both ambled to the hospital and waited under the same banyan tree restlessly.

The dead crow still lay there besieged by an army of big red ants. Some of the crow's limbs were strewn over by the ants. They had a feast of their own. Meanwhile, a flock of crows flew down from the sky and started clamoring once again.

By about 9:30 am, Usha's uncle and Bharati arrived at the hospital. As they got out of the car, they could sense the calamity. Dr.Venkataramaiah and Annapurnaiah's also came back to the scene and looked crestfallen. Bharati collapsed on the back seat of the car and could not control her grief; tears flowed from her eyes.

In the recent past, Bharati was at loggerheads with her mother for trivial reasons. But her arrogant behavior and bellicose attitude were only skin-deep. It was only out of sheer frustration that she vented her suppressed anger at the ill-treatment she had received from her relatives in the absence of her parents. She knew deep down that her mother was a puppet in the hands circumstances. Now Bharati slipped into a quiet melancholia centered on her mother.

Dr. Seshagiri Rao could hardly believe the untimely death of his beloved sister; he was startled and dazed. Now he had a dilemma. He had to make a quick decision about whether or not he should he take Kusuma's body to Poolla. After a few agonizing moments, he came to a decision. He discussed it with those who were present. 'If we take the dead body to Poolla, my aging mother cannot withstand the shock. This is the first death in our family after my father's demise in 1952. Moreover, it would be a lethal blow to Vasant and Bujji to see their mother's dead body. So, it would be better to perform her last rites here,' he pronounced with a heavy heart.

They all agreed. Annapurnaiah volunteered to go to the cremation ground ahead of them to make the funeral arrangements. Dr. Venkataramaiah brought a bullock cart to carry the dead body. Kusuma's body was brought out of the mortuary. On seeing her mother's dead body for the first time, Bharati completely broke down.

Kusuma wore an orange sari presented to her once by Dr. Seshagiri Rao. Once a glittering diamond-studded necklace adorned her neck; but now there was only a necklace of black beads. She had green glass bangles on her wrists. Surprisingly her *mangala sutram* was missing. What happened to it? Did U.G. sell it off in America along with her other gold ornaments?

After everyone had the last chance to see Kusuma's body; it was laid in the cart for the final journey. Bharati and Usha went to their relatives' house, as children were not permitted in the cremation ground.

By the time the cart arrived at the cremation ground, Annapurnaiah was waiting with priest. Dr. Seshagiri Rao lit the funeral pyre and stood there watching the flames. The crows were clamoring. The street dogs in the area were roaming about barking.

Unexpectedly, a slight drizzle started, as if the Rain God descended to kiss her body, sharing the grief of her untimely death. The body which was once shining and shimmering like pure gold turned into a heap of ashes. All her ardent desires, traumatic suffering burned out never to bother her again. There was a crackling sound in the pyre, indicating the explosion of the skull. Tradition considers the explosion as a sort of liberation for the departed soul.

They all returned from the cremation ground to their relative's house. Dr. Seshagiri Rao had a bath and a brief rest.

Kusuma was born on 24th April 1928 in Machilipatnamand her final journey ended in Eluru on 20th October 1962.

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After resting, Dr. Seshagiri Rao left for Poolla by car along with Dr. Venkataramaiah, Annapurnaiah, Bharati, Usha and the relative who had accompanied Usha. On seeing everyone except Kusuma come out of the car with downcast faces, Ratnamma guessed what might have happened. She was overcome by inexpressible grief. She never in her

wildest of dreams dreamt that her last daughter, the darling of the whole Tadimalla family would disappear for ever, never to come back. She collapsed on the ground like a colossal uprooted tree and wept inconsolably.

Vasant and Bujji were petrified. Bujji looked for his mother. 'Where is our *Amma*?' Usha and Bharati maintained a stony silence. All of a sudden Vasant and Bujji started crying uncontrollably. Vasant could grasp the reality of the situation but not Bujji. Someone picked up Bujji and tried to explain to him: 'Your mother had been called away by God.'

'Why does God want my mother?'

'...because your mother was a very good person. God likes good people.'

'When will she be back?'

'Once a person goes to Him, she won't come back.'

'I don't like that God,' Bujji said innocently while still sobbing.

Bujji could understand one thing now: he would never see his mother again, she would never feed him and nor tell him stories.

The whole house reverberated with agonizing lamentation. At the sight of the wailing Vasant, Bujji and others, Seshagiri Rao had a surge of grief which had been buried in him temporarily. He now realized beyond doubt that his beloved sister had died. All of a sudden, an icy wind rushed through the window. His body shivered. He rubbed his eyes, dragged his feet towards a vacant room and dropped on a cot before him. He felt alone.... He burst into a heart-rending wail and cried like a motherless child. After some time, he felt some relief.

The next day, he went to the cremation ground in Eluru and collected Kusuma's ashes which were later immersed in the Godavari River in Rajahmundry.

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On 30th October 1962, it was the tenth day of the funeral. All the relatives, including Sitaramayya, U.G.'s father, were informed. Minakshi, the elder sister of Kusuma, and her husband Balakrishna arrived in Poolla. Normally the last rites would be performed by the husband of the deceased. But since her husband was not around to perform the funeral rites, Minakshi and her husband assumed the duty.

In spite of her gory death, Kusuma died a *punistri* or *Punya stri*[92]. This is regarded as auspicious in the Hindu tradition. The decorated dead body of a *punistri* is treated with great respect. People would throng to have a *darshan* of the body. They would pay their homage by offering flowers, etc., and would even touch her feet.

The day after the funeral, after most of the relatives had left, Sitaramayya went back to Hyderabad taking Vasant with him to raise him there. Dr. Seshagiri Rao and Bharati

returned to Visakhapatnam. Ratnamma took the responsibility of rearing Bujji. Usha too continued her education in Poolla, but later moved to Visakhapatnam for further studies.

Thus, the curtain fell on the drama of Kusuma's life never to be raised again.

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49. Nissahaya Upanishad

(A Tale of Helplessness)

Dr. Ramana continued to give five pounds a week to U.G. for another six- or seven-month period. Due to some problems back at home, he had to discontinue his assistance to U.G., and he felt sorry and guilty for his inability. But U.G. set him at ease saying, 'I am highly indebted to you for the kind assistance you've already given me. Please don't bother about me. I'll manage somehow.' U.G. maintained a stoic attitude and did not feel disappointed. And he never worried about money.

'Whatever shall happen will happen in its own way and in its own time. It won't happen as per man's wishes. Take life as it comes,' U.G. told himself.

So far, luckily, U.G. had been paying his hotel bills on time, once every week. But one week everything had dried up. A bill was pending. In view of his present financial condition, the manager of the hotel arranged to keep his belongings in a safe place and told U.G. that he could spend his time in the hotel lounge from 6 am to 11 pm daily. He provided a place for him to sleep at night.

The life of U.G. took a new turn. He spent his time in front of the TV in the lounge till the evening and would return to the hotel late at night to sleep. While spending his time in the lounge, naturally U.G. attracted new acquaintances. He sometimes read their palms, employing his recently-acquired skill of palm-reading, and that helped him pay for his food. Now and then U.G. also received money from his acquaitances without asking for it.

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John Piatras, U.G.'s close friend from Chicago, had been corresponding with him often. He happened to be in London that day, and as he knew where U.G. was living, he visited him at his hotel. U.G. was not there; they said he had just left for a walk along with a friend. He waited for an hour, but U.G. did not return.

The next day, early in the morning, he came to the hotel. U.G. was sitting in a sofa watching T.V. John had an uneasy feeling. After the usual greetings, he enquired 'How are Kusuma and Vasant?' U.G. responded with silence, which indicated to John that he was not interested in probing personal questions. He wondered what had transpired between Chicago and London. Where did it go wrong? He enquired, 'U.G., you're not as you were before? Where went wrong, if I may ask?'

'Nothing's wrong with me,' U.G. exclaimed coolly, 'I am comfortable. I live life as it comes. Don't read too much into it or delve deep. After all, it's life; it's always the unknown. And I have no regrets.'

Not completely satisfied with his evasive answer, John asked, 'What are you doing here anyway?' He tried to probe further. 'O, come on, it's nothing,' U. G. replied casually, 'I

detached myself from everything. Let me be what I am. Life is full of interesting twists and turns. It's a challenge.'

John changed the topic: 'I learned that Krishnaji is here. How are your relations with him?' he enquired.

'Sometime ago I met him casually. As you are aware I am least interested in his pontificating sermons,' said U.G.

After an hour John left. He succeeded in eliciting some more details regarding U.G.'s present mode of living.

After a few days, he went to Krishnaji's place and sought his personal audience. People around Krishnaji flatly refused it saying that Krishnaji did not to see anyone without a prior appointment. John waited for more than two hours in front of the building. At the end they budged and allowed him to see Krishnaji.

As usual Krishnaji received him cordially, as if he had known him for ages. They talked for an hour. Krishnaji seemed impressed by John's approach to spiritual matters. He invited him to come again the next day. John happily nodded in agreement.

The next day, John arrived punctually at the appointed time. They discussed a host of subjects. At the end of their conversation, John all of a sudden raised the subject of U.G. and related every detail of U.G.'s present plight.

There followed a few moments of silence. Krishnaji who till then had been leaning back in his seat, on hearing John, moved forward and his demeanor had changed. He cupped his hands to cover his face and for a few moments he appeared as though he was choking with emotion. He shook his head several times, took out his handkerchief and wiped his tears. Krishnaji never displayed in public such emotional feelings regarding anyone.

John was bewildered and taken aback by Krishnaji's emotional response. He took leave of Krishnaji with a heavy heart.

He tried several times to meet U.G., but U.G. was not available. He never met U.G. or Krishnaji again. He left London, perhaps for the U.S. and his further wheabouts were not known.

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U.G. was bored, dull and inert in the uninspiring environment of the hotel. And he was tired of living at the mercy of others. He wanted to uplift his jaded spirits, at least during the daytime, somewhere else. But it was winter and bitterly cold in the outdoors. Where could he find a warm place? He thought that perhaps the British Museum National Library on Great Russell Street would be a suitable place to spend his daytime. He got admission into that reputed library by showing them his credentials. He walked through the different stacks of books. And he stood before one of them and looked at

the titles of the books in it. He picked randomly a bulky book out of curiosity: *Thesaurus of Underground Slang* was its title. He browsed its pages and felt that its contents might be interesting. He found a convenient place to sit and began to read it. Each day he read a part of the book in detail.

U.G. learned that the seat in which he was sitting was the same seat in which the great prophet of the theory of Communism, Karl Marx, sat and wrote the classic *Das Kapital.*

U.G. spent the entire day each day in the library to avoid the outside cold. He would go back to the hotel late at night to sleep.

The winter cold abated and the weather became tolerable. Gradually, U.G. stopped visiting the library and started to roam the streets of London. He used to walk through Piccadilly Circus, Berkeley Square, Russell Square, Kensington Square and other areas in London.

As usual, money to pay for his sundry expenses was not a problem. Someone or other came to his rescue to fill his needs in a minimal fashion.

While roaming about in the city like a drifter, U.G. would sometimes go into areas like the "red light" district. While walking along the pavement there, he saw names and phone numbers of prostitutes in that area displayed on pieces of paper pinned to trees. He read the names and phone numbers so many times that he almost memorized them.

He led an indolent and indifferent life. Why was he roaming so aimlessly? Was his life slipping away from him? When a beehive is disrupted the bees abandon it and scatter in different directions. U.G. seems to have vacated life itself. Yet something sustained him in spite of himself.

He was isolated in an insulated world and was living in the present, without interference from his bygone past. His life was on hold. It required no volition or will on his part. This state of "helplessness" was perhaps a state of total surrender to life. Yet it is part and parcel of life itself. It is life sustaining itself in a different dimension.

A person who has succumbed to such a helpless state feels that he is living in a natural, smooth and normal way of life. Hence the question does not arise as to how to wriggle out it. In fact, there is no way out. U.G., somewhere along the line, surrendered to life in a state of total helplessness.

In such a state a person renounces, relinquishes and rejects everything. He loses even his identity. There is nothing left for him except the void. It is said that 'Surrender is a state of falling back upon oneself.' The void is the throbbing energy. The void is the perfume of the unknown. It is the living flame of life.

In some extreme cases, a person in this state of void pines, screams and cries for the grace of God. Sometimes, the void creates acute psychosomatic disorders, even hallucinations in him. In certain extreme cases the person might even die.

Here, the ego plays a pivotal role in prompting him to avoid the void at every stage. The ego never allows its own annihilation. It plays all the tricks in its bag to survive. If a person can overcomes the ego's enticements, he is lucky. That would be end of the ego's cruel game. The death of the ego means the unfolding of self-realization.

U.G. was never a follower. In fact, he had rebelled against all methods, systems and *sadhana*. He rejected everything in the Holy Scriptures. However, in his case, total surrender to life blossomed in a different dimension: he became inert, indolent and sluggish in his behavior and functioning. Friends who watched U.G. from close quarters remarked, 'It's a journey through the dark night of the soul.'

For U.G., however, was unperturbed by this situation. There was no conflict within him. He was like a detached spectator of his life. He experienced no worldly anxieties or despondency. He felt that the best thing he could do was to do nothing at all and let life flow in its own rhythm.

Hunger and thirst did not pose a threat to him. As a Telugu idiom[93] implies, a python does not go out hunting for food; if it comes across food, it consumes it; otherwise, it stays put. If any one tortures it, it does not react or move at all. Even if it faces danger for its life, it does not try to protect itself. Yet, it can continue to live without food for a length of time.

Some of U.G.'s friends sympathetic to his condition advised him to register as an unemployed person so that he could get some assistance from the government. But he did not act on the suggestion.

He visited the Commonwealth Club whenever he wanted to. His Pakistani friends, knowing his present condition, began to invite him to eat with them by turns. They competed with each other to have him at their homes as their guest. The most revered Prophet Mohammad (May peace be with him!) left Mecca for Madina to protect himself from his enemies. Every citizen in Madina vied with one another to have the Divine Messenger as his guest. Then the Prophet said, 'I shall be the guest at the house in front of which my camel stops.' U.G. followed his usual toss of the coin method to decide upon whose home he would go to on a certain day.

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Days rolled on. One day, U.G. seriously pondered: What is this way of living? In what direction is my life going? Am I condemned to live on the charity of others? How long? Is this not honorable begging? U.G. was weary of his muddled way of life. Everything was bungled and uprooted. So far in his life U.G. had never shed tears for himself or for others. But for the first time, his eyes moistened automatically. He closed his eyes tightly and the dampness dried out.

After a few days he stopped visiting the Commonwealth Club and his Pakistani friends. He disappeared from that scene.

Letters were written to different places to locate U.G. to inform him of the demise of his wife Kusuma. The Indian Ambassador in London was informed. A letter was written to Dr. Machiraju Venkataramana and also to various other addresses where U.G. had previously stayed. Many of his friends, especially Pakistanis, were in search of him. There was no trace of him. Where had he disappeared?

In March 1963, Dr. Venkataramana unexpectedly noticed U.G. walking along the sidewalk near Berkeley Square. He shouted several times and ran toward him.

'Where have you been U.G.? I have been searching for you in the entire city of London for the last five months. Where are you staying now?' so saying, he took out a letter from his pocket and handed it to U.G.

U.G.'s face was expressionless and his looks were remote and vacant. He read the letter casually. He showed no reaction. He seemed untouched by its contents. He tore it into pieces and threw it in a nearby dustbin. He stood still like a sphinx.

Dr. Venkataramana was puzzled at the behavior of U.G. and asked 'Have you read the letter?' in an astonished tone.

'Yes, my wife Kusuma accidentally fell ill and died five months ago. That's what it was about,' he replied calmly.

'I have been holding the letter with me for the last five months hoping to find you,' Dr. Venkataramana said.

U.G. seemed untouched and unaffected by the tragedy. After a long pause, U.G. thanked him for the letter and walked away briskly.

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A foot-loose person like U.G. cannot stay at any particular place for a length of time. He was vexed with his routine hotel life. He started to roam about every nook and corner of London aimlessly. Whenever he got hungry he got into a food joint, nibbled something and get back to his vagabond lifestyle.

Many days elapsed. One day on his rounds on the streets of London, U.G. went to Hyde Park. It was crowded with people. On one side of it, soap-box orators were giving emotional lectures extempore. Part of the audience was clapping and while the others burst into laughter.

It was getting dark and slowly people were leaving. U.G. lay on the grass lawn. His thoughts were endless and chaotic. Though he did not feel the existence of his "head", thoughts were flowing and flying.

U.G.'s present thoughts were about thought itself: 'What is thought? From where do thoughts originate? Why did tradition teach us to control thoughts? Can one control thoughts? Is there really a state of thoughtlessness? If there is, what would it be like?' These were all unanswered questions in his mind.

U.G. turned on his back, making his bag his pillow, and gazed at the sky. He was bone-tired and he planned to spend the night there in the park under the naked sky. He recalled a verse from Sankara's famous *Bhaja Govindam,* which describes the state of peace and bliss in a person who has renounced:

> *To a man who is content to live in a temple or under a tree,*
> *with nothing more than the skin of a deer to wear,*
> *to a man who makes bare earth his bed*
> *and gives up all gifts and pleasures,*
> *to such a man how can renunciation*
> *not bring true happiness?*[94]

While U.G. was wrestling with such thoughts and elaborating on them in his mind, he heard a sound near him. A police constable with a large body and precariously opaque eyes was standing before him.

'What are you doing here? Within a few minutes the gates will be closed, you know? You have to move on,' he said rather harshly.

U.G. slowly got up and stood still on the ground. He had no choice. Reluctantly he picked up his bag and started walked toward the gate gingerly. But where else could he find shelter? His tired limbs were not co-operating. Where else could he go? In his quandary, it suddenly flashed in his mind, "Go to the Ramakrishna Ashram!"

U.G. left the park rapidly. While walking he put his hand in his pocket. He had only six pence left with him. The Ashram was far away. He arrived at the subway station. In fifteen minutes a train arrived and U.G. got on it. After ten minutes he got off at some point and started walking toward his destination.

At last he reached the Ramakrishna Ashram. Its gates were closed. He pushed the heavy gates and entered the premises. Almost all the lights in the building were out. It was about 11 O'clock in the night. It was an odd time and he felt that he would cause inconvenience to the inmates. He hesitated for a minute.

But, after taking all the pains to come to the Ashram dragging his body, why hesitate now? He rang the doorbell for half a minute. After a short time, someone opened the inside door, wondering who was calling so late at night? He saw U.G. standing there with a crestfallen face and tattered limbs. 'Who are you and what do you want?' he enquired. 'I would like to see Swamiji.' 'What, at this time? He is resting. He won't see anyone now,' the man replied curtly.

'I know, but my circumstances are such that I've got to see him now.'

'I'm sorry; we're not supposed to disturb Swamiji. He's in his room. Kindly come in the morning, could you?' he replied.

'I'm sorry sir, but I've come here walking a long distance wanting to see Swamiji.'

'I don't know who you are and from where you've come. I don't understand why you insist on seeing Swamiji at this odd hour? Kindly come tomorrow.'

U.G. stood there as if he would not move an inch without seeing Swamiji.

Meanwhile, the Swamiji himself came out and asked, 'What's going on here? Whom are you arguing with?' he enquired.

'This gentleman wants to see you, sir, right now and at any cost. In spite of my repeated polite requests, he does not budge. He insists on seeing you right now.'

Swamiji came forward, turned the lights on and looked at U.G. U.G. folded his two hands greeting him respectfully. The Swami looked at him with undivided attention.

U.G. took out his résumé from his leather bag and handed it to him. The bag included paper clippings of his lectures, arranged by Erma Crumbly, and of the opinions of Dr. Radhakrishnan, Norman Cousins and others.

The Swami browsed through the file for a few minutes with interest. He looked again at U.G. for a moment, surprised. U.G. appeared like a living corpse who had just emerged from a tomb. But his eyes were emanating a spiritual radiance.

Swamiji glanced again at U.G., and felt sympathy for him. 'Well, what do you want at this moment?' he asked in a soft voice.

'I would like to spend the night in the meditation hall,' U.G. said humbly.

'No, I'm sorry, no one is allowed in there after 8 pm.

But Swamiji could not understand why U.G. wanted to spend the night there.

U.G. heaved a big sigh and said, 'I don't have any shelter, Swamiji. I'll have to be on the streets for the rest of the night. And at the moment I am penniless,' he confessed.

Swamiji could understand his problem now. 'Let me see what I can do for you,' he said. He then rushed inside and returned with some money. He gave it to U.G. and said, 'There is a hotel in the next street. Most of the Indians stay there. I'll call them to tell that you're coming and you can stay there. Tomorrow morning we'll talk leisurely. Good night and God bless!'

'Many thanks, Swamiji. I am grateful for your help.' U.G. took leave of him and went to the hotel. Swamiji's name was Swami Ghanananda.
It was past midnight on 11th May 1963. U.G. spent the night in the hotel. He had a sound sleep which he'd not had for a long time. He woke up next morning much refreshed. After washing he proceeded to the Ramakrishna Ashram.

It was 12:30 in the afternoon. The inmates were having their lunch at that time. As soon as U.G. walked in, he was invited to lunch. As usual, U.G. ate small quantities, and he felt at peace. After lunch, several inmates introduced themselves to U.G.

Then Swamiji sent for U.G. U.G. went to his room and greeted him politely. In the room the portraits of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita hung on the walls. Sandalwood garlands decorated the photos. On both sides of Swamiji's table there were two big bookshelves with a number of spiritual books. The room had an aroma of joss sticks. U.G. glanced curiously at the stacks of books.

Swamiji looked at U.G. furtively. U.G. too was observing Swamiji. He was a middle-aged man with a domineering personality. He wore saffron robes, had a shaven head, a broad face, large ears, bright eyes and a sharp nose. There was a spiritual radiance around him and he had a mature personality.

A pregnant silence reigned between them for a few minutes. Swamiji said, 'Well, Mr. Krishnamurti, it's interesting that we have been looking for a person who has a similar background to yours for the past week. We even advertised in the local papers. No one has answered. We are busy with the preparation of a souvenir magazine to celebrate Swami Vivekananda's centenary. Our President, Dr. Radhakrishnan, is the Chairman of the Centenary Committee. Our local ambassador is the chief patron. We received several contributions to the magazine from eminent people.' He then added, 'As luck would have it, one of our inmates, who has been in charge of the editorial section, became insane. He is currently in the hospital. And our time is running out. All of a sudden, you have emerged from nowhere. Now, you with your background will perfectly fit for this job. If you take up the responsibility, you will also receive appropriate remuneration.'

On hearing this U.G. replied uneasily, 'Sorry, Swamiji, I am grateful for your kindness. But my present state of mind is all out of sorts. I don't know what I am up to. Somehow I lost my bearings; evidently I am not confident of myself. I may not do justice to the job. Please give the work to someone else.'

'I may not know your condition, but I have belief in your capacity. I will not place the entire responsibility on your shoulders; we will work together. It's an important job. Please co-operate with me.'

U.G. exclaimed rather reluctantly, embarrassed by his own position, 'Excuse me, Swamiji, for my inability to take up the job. I am like an extinguished volcano; to be honest, nothing gels in my mind. Give me any other job and I'll do it, even work in the kitchen. But I don't think I can do the editing.'

Swamiji shook his head, 'No, Krishnamurti, you must help me. Take complete rest to refresh your sagging spirits.' He added, 'Besides, there is no other work that you can do here except editing. And you are going to do it. God bless you,' and rose to his feet and left the room.

U.G. found himself strangely at a loss for words. He could not formulate an outright refusal but compromised with a halfhearted assent.

This was an unexpected and sudden shift from inertia to activity in U.G.'s life. He got into the job unwillingly; rather, it was forced on him. He and the Swami worked together, selecting articles, editing them and making them ready for print.

One day, while he was at the Ashram, U.G. found that both his legs were immobilized. When he attempted to walk, he did not succeed. He could not keep his body in balance. For several months he was on the move, roaming about aimlessly without enough rest for the body. His feet were worn out and became weak; as a result, they could not carry his load. He was not alarmed. Yet, he could not be too casual about the problem. He was worried about having to be hospitalized.

A doctor was called in. He thoroughly examined U.G.'s frail body and recommended complete bed rest to be followed by massages. U.G. gradually regained the strength of his legs and their normal functioning. He resumed his editing work.

U.G. was not fully satisfied with his work; and perhaps neither was Swamiji. Nevertheless Swamiji paid him a remuneration of five pounds per week.

Meanwhile, U.G. visited his old hotel, paid his dues, thanked the manager profusely for his generosity and took possession of his modest luggage. When asked about his current whereabouts, U.G. laughed like a child and, closing his eyes, exclaimed, 'I am riding on the wind. Let them catch me if they can. So long!' and darted off.

Now U.G.'s pocket was jingling after a long time and that too with his own earned money. After his Chicago lecturers he had lost the sense of the value of money, because he had no money of his own. This was great lift to his spirits. He lost a fortune, yet he never learned a single lesson from the loss. Even in the present tight situation he had no desire to save money. That was characteristic of U.G.

The Ashram took care of his day-to-day needs. To spend his leisure time he visited the movie theatres of London. After finishing his editing work in the morning he would have lunch along with others in the Ashram. After that he would go to the theatres to see some movie or other. He watched some stage plays as well. He watched the play *The Mousetrap* by Agatha Christie which had been running for several years without a break.

The Ashram inmates were drawn to U.G. as a fund of knowledge regarding many topics, especially in the spiritual and philosophical areas.

The inmates regularly spent considerable time in the meditation hall meditating. Once, while watching them, U.G. thought to himself, 'I feel sorry for these people. With what hope are they practicing meditation? What will they gain from it? How could I persuade them that it's all futile and a mere waste of time? What they experience in meditation is sheer mental projection, an absolute mirage. Why are these folks kidding themselves? They are indulging in wasteful practices by torturing their bodies and

minds. Why should life be divided as spiritual and mundane? Are they two different things?'

But strangely, whenever U.G. stepped into the meditation hall, his own body was invigorated. Just as a magnet affects a piece of iron, his body was undergoing sensitive vibrations. The body was strumming in its own rhythm. He could not figure out why his body pulsated in this fashion. He did not, however, attach any special significance to the vibrations.

One day, while U.G. was sitting in the meditation hall with a blank mind, he experienced something strange: there was some kind of movement inside his body; some energy was coming up from the penis and out through the head, as if there was a hole in it. The energy was moving in circles in the clockwise direction and then in the counter-clockwise direction. It was making several circular motions before it passed out of the head.

Then the energy returned to his penis and later it again went up through his head. This process went on for some time and then subsided. He did not relate this experience to anything.

He was a finished man; yet someone was feeding him; and someone was taking care of him. He had no worry about what might happen next or where his next meal came from. Yet inside of him something was happening... What could it be?

U.G. could not fathom this unexpected experience. As usual, he began to be suspicious of this strange energy. A long time ago his head had disappeared and he was not aware of it even now. Perhaps this was another mind game. Perhaps the body might undergo some mutation in course of time. The present experience might be a prologue to it. Who knows?

Jagannath was one of the few friends U.G. had in the Ashram. He was the chief disciple of Swamiji and next in line to him to take charge of the Ashram. He was an epitome of tradition, while U.G. revolted against it. They had friendly arguments. Both stuck to their guns. U.G. vehemently attacked the basic tenets of the yoga system and even decimated everything labeled spirituality. Neither budged an inch. In course of time, Jagannath's belief system slowly caved in and he gradually came under U.G.'s influence.

When U.G. presented his views, they appeared to be sound to Jagannath. He was caught between two crosscurrents and started questing himself. He was unable to accept or reject the ideas propounded by U.G. He peered into his empty soul and found that he had been a victim of U.G.'s sweeping influence. He characterized it as some sort of counter-spirituality. Jagannath tried to wriggle out of the grip of U.G. Slowly he began to patch the cracks in his mind. He avoided further contact with U.G.

The other inmates of the Ashram were also coming under U.G.'s influence. Some of them started to be disillusioned with the Ashram life.

Swamiji realized that the U.G.'s presence was having a deleterious effect on some of the inmates. He felt that U.G. was, after all, a dangerous person with revolutionary ideas. He thought that U.G. was a spiritual saboteur par excellence. Indisputably, U.G. had great logical powers. If U.G. continued to stay there, the Ashram might face a serious hazard. But how could he tell U.G. outright on his face to leave the Ashram?

Meanwhile, the centenary issue of Swami Vivekananda was completed and released amidst éclat.

U.G. had been absent from the Ashram for some time, spending his time elsewhere. On his return he learned that Swamiji was hospitalized with some ophthalmic disease. The doctors examined his eyes and decided to operate on them. U.G. learned about it and wrote a letter to Swamiji:

> 68 Duke's Avenue
> Muswell Hill
> London 10
> 7th September 1963
>
> I have just been told by Maharaj that the eye operation has been a success and that you are well on your way to complete recovery, and that you will be returning to the Center in a week or so. This is very good news. And we are all looking forward to seeing you back at the Center ere long.
>
> I would like to pay you a visit, but certainly not if this will in any way cause strain to you. I wouldn't come to trouble you. If it isn't too much of a strain, it would give me great pleasure to see you at the Hospital, and you may be assured that it will be a very short one.
>
> I wish to God I knew what hidden hand led me to the Center. When you suggested helping you out with some kind of editing work, I did not for a moment hesitate to fall in with your kind suggestion. What I did not know was that I would be having the most Blessed Moments of my life here at the Center. It is needless to add that it has been a great privilege to have associated myself with you, and I feel greatly refreshed both in mind and body.
>
> That, however, apart, my continued stay here at the Center and the necessary atmosphere for alert and strenuous discernment in meditation have helped me tremendously. The hidden agony of my life which no human being could understand has dissolved itself into thin air, as it were, and this has awakened me to what may loosely be called a kind of spiritual sleepwalking. I have pulled myself out from what looked like the edge of an abyss.
>
> You know that there are very rare occasions in the lives of most of us when we have brief experiences of existing beyond time. I too have had several such moments. But this has been more than fleeting and has indeed become an abiding certainty. Nevertheless the strains and stresses of adjusting myself to a whole new way of life resulted in a peculiar state of mind hedged with some

kind of indolence, may be a form of conceit, which only meant greater and greater sorrow but left me with a kind of empty expectancy. I may have achieved a certain calmness, but that calmness was of death, producing languor. I have always felt and still feel that one has to haul oneself out of one's own swamps by one's own bootstraps.

However, all my strenuous and directed attention hasn't helped me much to break the vicious circle. Well, now, through the touch of the inscrutable Divine Power of Sri Ramakrishna, I have been blessed beyond words with the clarity of perception. And this calmness is a calmness without a trace of languor or contentment or watchful expectancy but one of completeness and wholeness. Need I say that when I burst forth into the world — the joy which overflows the heart is indeed bursting forth – I will be a new man?

With deep and affectionate regards,

Ever yours,
U.G. Krishnamurti

Swamiji read the letter of U.G. several times with due attention and understood it in the right perspective. He was impressed by U.G. candor and honesty.

After a few days U.G. paid a visit to Swamiji in the hospital and enquired about his health.

Sometime later, an interesting event took place. Sri Ramakrishna appeared in U.G.'s dream and said, 'You are taking shelter in my Ashram, yet you are acting treacherously. You are not fit to stay here. Pack up and leave immediately,' so chiding he kicked U.G.

U.G. woke up, recalled the dream and smiled within himself: 'It's time to leave.'

Till now, the life of U.G. had been going smoothly in the Ashram. One final day, U.G. met Swamiji and said, 'Swamiji, it's time for me to leave. I am grateful for your affection and good will. The time I have spent in the Ashram has been invaluable. At a crucial juncture of my life, I was destined to come here; and you came to my rescue and lifted my sagging spirits reassuringly. You have been very generous and sympathetic to me. I will cherish these memorable moments for many years to come.'

Swamiji probably felt relieved and sorry at the same time at their parting, as U.G. had moved with him closely.

Swamiji recalled his first meeting with U.G. when U.G. looked troubled. Now he seemed refreshed and regrouped, ready to face further challenges of life. Swamiji breathed heavily and said, 'Well, Krishnamurti! I am pleased with you. You are a difficult personality to understand, a man of paradoxical nature. However, many thanks for the help you have given me. Good luck and may God bless you in your future endeavors!' He then opened the table drawer, took out a wad of currency bills and placed it in U.G.'s hand. 'Please accept this as my last gift. Once again, my best wishes to you. So long!' Swamiji walked U.G. to the gate and bid him farewell.

U.G. set out carrying his small luggage including his portable typewriter. Now the question arose in his mind: where should he go? For obvious reasons, he disliked going to India. Nothing remained there for him. He discarded everyone and everything. Nothing was there which he could call his own except his children. They were growing up somewhere and didn't depend on him any longer. He cut their umbilical cords long ago. He was not sentimental and would not brood over the legacy of the past.

U.G. had an open tourist class airline ticket. He cashed the ticket for $350. He converted the fifty pounds given by Swami Ghanananda also into dollars. He no longer cared for the nomadic life of London. He had enough of London. He decided to go to Paris and live there. Thus his stay in London came to an end.

* * * * * * *

U.G. arrived in Paris and lodged in a moderately-priced hotel. He had no avocation or occupation. Walking along the streets of Paris and window-shopping were his only re-creations. He was forced to learn French and had gained a working knowledge of the language.

Charles de Gaulle, the President of France, once said, 'It's not easy to rule a country which produces 360 varieties of cheese.' U.G. recalled these words. He tried a new variety of cheese each day.

U.G.'s "spiritual hibernation" was like an unknown journey without a specific destination; it had no rudder, no outrigger, no anchor and not even a compass. He drifted with the wind, without any control.

One day, he was sitting in the sofa near the window in his room watching the street. After half an hour he closed the window and walked around in the room for some time. A multitude of thoughts crowded his mind. His mood was rather pensive and slightly gloomy. He touched his head casually with his hand. It was there, he could feel it! He mused: 'What is thought? The question itself is a thought. Is trying to escape from thought escaping from myself? If it is, are my thought and "myself" tied together? Do thoughts have an existence of their own? Thought is a labyrinth which has no outlet, no exit route. Is there any reality beyond thought? Is there a thoughtless state? The Buddha, Jesus and Prophet Mohammad (May peace be with him!) probably overcame the network of thought and realized themselves? But what is self-realization? Is there any self to be realized?'

Lord Buddha said, 'Don't dip the string of thoughts into the unfathomable. The one who questions errs, and the one who answers also errs.'

U.G.'s thoughts flinched away with that idea and he became conscious of the room. Money was running out fast. How long could he stay in Paris with an empty pocket? What was the way out? U.G. was seized by a corroding uncertainty.

That day, he was strolling leisurely on the busy boulevard, Rue de Passy, near the Seine River. From the opposite direction a woman accosted him. 'What a pleasant surprise to

see you here? After long time,' her voice was full of enthusiasm. U.G. turned his head toward her: 'O, boy, it's you! How come you're here?' he queried with surprise in his voice. 'I was on a holiday trip. I was to go back yesterday; but somehow I have postponed the trip,' she answered. It was Linda from Chicago.

She looked at U.G. with undivided attention. 'You're not same man as you were before; I can barely recognize you,' she blurted. 'No, I am same as I was before; maybe that's how see me,' replied U.G. casually. She was quite jubilant. U.G. had never seen her face light up as it had now.

The sky was grey and a mist was rising from the pavement. After a pause she said enthusiastically, 'U.G., let's spend some time together. Would you mind accompanying me to a bistro?' After a few moments of silence, U.G. unwillingly nodded his head. They walked on the main street and entered a crowded restaurant. There was merry-making with shouting and laughter. They sat in a corner, and, after waiting for a few minutes, Linda ordered some snacks and coffee. She enquired: 'Now tell me, what are you doing here? Where are your wife and children? I can't believe myself seeing you; it's like a dream.' She continued, 'you look almost out of sorts and very odd. You have a withered face. You seem dull, apathetic, sluggish, tired and deflated. What has transpired, if I may ask?' probing U.G. U.G. kept quiet, and after a long pause, he said rather impassively, 'I'm all right; whatever happens is part of life. Changes are inevitable. I've nothing to complain about.' Linda was not convinced by his philosophical-sounding reply; she pressed him for more details. U.G. unfolded his life events from Chicago to Paris, without remorse or self-pity, very casually, as if he was reading out from a book.

After hearing his lengthy account, many hazy ideas surfaced in her mental horizon. After finishing coffee, she paid the bill and rose to her feet. She said decisively to U.G., 'U.G., follow me, please.' 'Where? What for?' 'Please, just come on, U.G.,' she answered in a warm and affectionate voice. U.G. was consumed with curiosity: why such a sudden change in her manner? He reluctantly ambled along with her. She hired a cab. They went a long distance.

The cab stopped in front of a huge building. That was the American Embassy in Paris. Why did she come here? She sought an audience with the Ambassador and was granted one instantly. Both went into the Ambassador's chamber. She had a brief talk with the Ambassador. She pulled out her check book and wrote a check in his presence for a million dollars and made it out to "U.G. Krishnamurti".

According to international monetary law, to transfer such a huge amount to someone the Ambassador's endorsement was needed. U.G. stood silently as a disinterested spectator. She handed the check to U.G. enthusiastically. He peeked at it and laughed derisively. He then tore up the check into pieces, crumpled the pieces into a tiny ball, and threw it in the waste basket underneath the huge 'U'-shaped table. Linda lost her bearings and stammered, 'What?' U.G. drew himself away a little distance and threw a glance at Linda, 'What made you to think that I would accept such an offer?' he went on, 'No one can own me or hold me. No power on earth can entice me, especially by

offering petty sums of money, you understand? Never! I depend on no one. I need no consolation or comforting.'

Linda had now a clear sense of the irrevocable self-esteem and indomitable will underneath U.G.'s demeanor. U.G. continued, 'Mademoiselle, thank you for your gesture. Be happy and enjoy life... Good luck and au revoir!' and trotted out.

The American Ambassador was perplexed by all this drama enacted before him. Linda left the scene. Was it the "last temptation" in spiritual parlance? Or did Linda offer the money, knowingly or unknowingly, with some strings attached? Perhaps the fragrance of infatuation for U.G. still lingered in her bosom.

* * * * *

Days were rolling and so was the money running out in U.G.'s wallet. He was in a dilemma. What could be the next step? Where could he go? What resources did he have? He was not hoping for any miracle. So what was the way out?

He racked his brains and suddenly he could remember that in 1939, when he had first visited Europe, he opened a bank account in Zurich, Switzerland, and deposited some money in it. Later he spent part of it and but there should still be some amount left in the account along with some interest. Somehow all these years he did not remember this. If some money was still there by some stroke of luck, he could spend some time in Switzerland. If not, the future is unknown. He decided to take a plunge.

U.G. was in Paris for ninety days, tasting ninety varieties of cheese. Now it was the end of his Paris sojourn. He informed the manager to prepare the bill and he came down with his luggage. He paid the bill, thanked the manager and came out of the hotel. He hailed a taxi, got into it and said, 'Please take me to Gare de Lyon railway station,' rather loudly. The driver nodded affirmatively. After a half-hour ride the taxi stood in front of the station. U.G. paid the fare and said 'Au revoir' in French.

U.G. darted quickly into the station. It was a sprawling railway station buzzing with passengers. He went to the ticket booth and asked for a first class ticket to Zurich. The booking clerk was rather puzzled and said, 'Sorry, monsieur, from here no train goes to Zurich. This is Gare de l'Est. From here you can only go to Geneva.'

U.G. was startled, bewildered and utterly taken aback. He was dismayed, 'How could this have happened? I clearly told the cab driver the name of the station. What to do now? What's the next move?' For some reason, U.G. did not think of going back to Gare de Lyon station. Instead, he purchased a ticket to Geneva and boarded the train. On the train, he sat near a glass window and, as the train moved on, watched the receding beauty of nature.

The weather had undergone an autumnal change. The sun that had shone brilliantly had now slowly and steadily disappeared behind a low ceiling of clouds. A heavy wind blew steadily down, tossing the trees by the track and sending a swirl of fallen leaves.

A chilly wind greeted U.G. in Geneva. The station was crowded. Everyone hastened to to his or her respective destination. U.G. got off the train, came out, walked gingerly for about ten minutes and found lodging in a modest hotel.

He rested a while in his room and came out into the street. He lingered in crowded streets for some time. Peddlers were offering passersby their wares, and fruits were arranged in different designs in the shops. U.G. came back to his hotel, had a frugal meal and sat in a sofa calmly.

U.G. strolled down the lanes every day till his legs ached. Once every week, the hotel management presented his hotel bill and somehow he paid it. The next week passed. A new day dawned. He was uneasily pacing up and down in his room expecting some unpleasant event. The doorbell rang and the impending crucial day had arrived. He opened the door and found an employee of the hotel presenting him with a bill in a tray. He took the bill and the employee left the room. But where was the money to pay for it?

U.G. was on the verge of a mental breakdown. For several days he had been apprehensive of the final blow. The idea itself was unthinkable to him. But the naked facts gushed into his mind like a spring, namely, the prospect of going back to India.

U.G. marshaled all his strength to struggle back to the rails of sanity. Slowly, inch by inch, he regained his composure. A definite resolve had taken shape in his mind.

He took his luggage and scampered down to the manager to explain his inability to pay his bill and pledged to pay the dues in course of time. 'I feel extremely sorry for this awkward situation. I apologize. I'll leave my luggage here as assurance for my payment,' he said on a note of bitterness. The manager, a middle-aged man, was sensitive and understanding. He gazed at U.G. rather curiously and said in his crisp business manner with a shade of pity, 'I understand; you can go.' In Switzerland, non-payment of dues was considered deliberate cheating, a criminal offense punishable with imprisonment. U.G. profusely thanked the manager once again for his co-operation and walked out of the hotel.

The crucial moment had come for U.G. to act. The die was about to be cast. He glided slowly toward the intended destination. His thoughts wandered disconnectedly over the events of the day. U.G. collected his scattered mental faculties. His body was lethargic. He walked disinterestedly. A dejected feeling choked his throat. A cold, stinging gust of wind pierced through his flesh. Immobility bound him hand and foot. He was unaware of his surroundings. He reflected about the whimsical character of his ongoing life.

At least for a moment, a heavy load began to be lifted from his mind. He heaved a big sigh of relief when he saw from a distance the tricolor Indian flag fluttering in the wind above a building. U.G. arrived at the office of the Indian Vice-Consul in Geneva. That was the place for him to take shelter and then hopefully fly back to India.

Staff members were arriving one after another into the consulate precinct hurriedly. Other people, mostly Indian nationals were also going in. Among the employees there

were also some Swiss nationals. A Swiss lady hastily entered the lounge, looking rather crestfallen. She casually looked at U.G. who was sitting motionless. U.G. also glanced at her. She approached the reception table, opened one of its drawers and arranged things there in a tidy manner. Today, she was in a state of utter depression over certain tragic events of that morning which were averted rather mysteriously.

She suddenly turned her head to her right and began watching people going in and out of the office. After a while, U.G. approached the reception desk and asked the lady 'Madame, I would like to meet the Vice-Consul; could you fix me an appointment for me please?'

She looked at him intently and replied, 'Monsieur, if you want to see the Vice-Consul, his secretary is in the cubicle over there. Please go see him.' U.G. went to the secretary and made his request to him. The secretary replied politely, 'Please wait a little longer. He may come any moment. He has a prior commitment to an appointment. After that you may see him.' U.G. gave him his name and waited in the sofa rather restlessly. Waiting always made him uneasy and restless. But little did he know that the Swiss lady at the front desk had been watching him all this time out the corner of her eye.

Meanwhile, a Swami rushed into the office. He talked to the secretary and entered the chambers of the Vice-Consul. U.G. looked at the Swami perfunctorily.

Then there was a call, 'Monsieur Krishnamurti,' for him. U.G. instantly got up, adjusted himself and entered the Vice-Consul's office with the bag containing his portfolio in his hand. To his surprise the Swami was still seated by the side of the Vice-Consul. The ambassador invited U.G. saying, 'Please be seated,' and introduced the Swami to U.G. It was Swami Nityabodhananda of the Ramakrishna Mission. U.G. got up from his seat and folded his hands respectfully. The Swami reciprocated with a smile.

'I'm U.G. Krishnamurti from Madras,' he introduced himself. The Vice-Consul hailed from North India. He had a commanding personality. He was tall and hefty, had a broad forehead and bushy hair and a brown complexion. Behind his ears there were a few gray hairs; and he had a large nose with small eyes. Though his looks were somewhat sharp and imposing, his voice was soft. He must be about fifty years of age.

Swami Nityabodhananda was a man of medium stature with a large head and a broad forehead. His head looked shaven a few days before. His eyes were cool and calm, and had a probing quality to them. He seemed to be a person of gentle nature. He might have been about sixty years of age, but he looked younger, perhaps from practicing yoga. His body was sturdy. His spiritual maturity and mellowness added to his radiant personality. He seemed to be at peace with himself and looked an embodiment of the Indian spiritual tradition. His saffron robes added attraction to his looks. From their conversation U.G. understood that the Swami came to renew his passport and take care of some other matters.

The Vice-Consul glanced at U.G. in a friendly manner and asked, 'Well, Mr. Krishnamurti, how can I help you?' U.G. responded, 'I come from Andhra. My

boyhood was spent there and later I studied in Madras. There I worked in the Theosophical Society under Mr. Jinarajadasa and Mr. George Arundale. Later, I toured the world as lecturer for the Theosophical Society. After five years in that capacity, I traveled in different states in America as a speaker. I also visited Russia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and other communist countries. Then I came to London and spent some years there. Recently I visited Paris. After three months there, I came to Geneva three weeks ago, under forced circumstances.' He stopped abruptly.

'Are you here to give talks for some organization?' enquired the Vice-Consul. After a big sigh U.G. replied, 'No, I haven't come here for that purpose,' not knowing how to present his current mental condition. 'Well, I have been cornered into a series of crises which brought me here to Geneva without my choice. At this stage, I have no other choice except to return to India.'

The Vice-Consul looked at U.G. inquisitively and asked, 'What happened?'

'I spent all the money that I had with me and was unable to pay the hotel bill. Just a while ago today, I checked out promising them to settle it soon. Under these circumstances, I would like to go back to India as a repatriated citizen. Of course, I would need some money to pay for the hotel bill. I'll reimburse you once I get to India,' so saying, U.G. handed over his portfolio to the Vice-Consul to provide him with some references.

U.G. entwined his legs around each other, waiting for an answer. The Vice-Consul began to turn the pages in the portfolio out of curiosity.

The Swami could sense U.G.'s state of helplessness. He was watching U.G. with keen interest. U.G.'s face indicated to him self-control, intelligence and honesty. U.G. appeared to him like a wounded tiger resigned to his fate.

On the walls of the Vice-Consul's office there were photographs of some famous Indians – Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, Rabindranath Tagore and Lal Bahadur Sastri, the current Prime Minister and also Dr. Radhakrishnan, the President of India.

The Vice-Consul read through the portfolio and at a certain point he wondered if he was looking at the same man that had given those lectures, clippings of which he had read in the portfolio. He realized that the person that was sitting humbly before him was a unique man. If the clippings spoke correctly of him, he toured different countries as an unofficial ambassador of India and earned a reputation for his motherland.

'Well, Mr. Krishnamurti, I am delighted, indeed, to see you here.' The Swami also was curious to know the contents of the portfolio. He took the file from the hands of the Vice-Consul and began to read it avidly.

The Vice-Consul spoke again, 'How could you ask me to repatriate a great learned man like you to India, as if you were a destitute, a criminal or a smuggler?' he went on, 'I would suggest a way: you may write a letter to any of your friends and I presume you

have some.' U.G. was dumbfounded with this unexpected reply. He thought to himself, 'This means that I am not fortunate enough even to be repatriated? Under the present conditions, whom I can ask for money? I never did it before in my whole life.'

'Sir, I am thankful for your high regard for me. You are very generous. But kindly understand my position. I have no property in my name. All my resources have dried up and I am at the end of my tether. As I said before, I have remained aloof and led a secluded life. So I cannot request anyone for monetary help. I will be grateful to you if I could be repatriated,' emphasized U.G.

'If you really wish to write a letter, I am sure you will definitely receive the money you need. Moreover, you will be my privileged guest till you receive the money,' the Vice-Consul added, 'and your hotel bill will be settled right now. You can see my secretary, and I will ask him to pay the amount; but on one condition: in one month you'll have to get your money.' So saying, the ambassador got up from his seat, suggesting it was time to leave.

U.G. rose to his feet without protesting further. Meanwhile, the Swami had finished reading the file and placed it on the table. U.G. took it and trotted out from the room thanking the Vice-Consul and the Swami. The door closed behind him.

The Vice-Consul and Swami Nityabodhananda remained silent for some time. Outside the building there were some high-pitched sounds and there was a strong breeze. The fragrance of the flowers near the window was carried by the air and wafted through the room. From the window the slant sun rays fell on the ground and myriad particles of golden hue were dancing up and down.

Breaking the silence, Swami Nityabodhananda said, 'He is a strange person living an abnormal life. We don't really know his antecedents. Nevertheless, a mysterious air hangs around his personality.... Well. I shall see you here again in the evening. I have some work to attend to and I have to go to London tomorrow. Please take care of him and help him as much as you could.' He then left in a somewhat dazed state.

The Vice-Consul gave instructions to his secretary about U.G. and asked him to place him as a guest. Later, the secretary sent for U.G. who was waiting in the lounge wondering what his next move would be.

'Sir, please give me your passport,' the secretary requested. U.G. promptly gave his passport to the secretary who noticed that U.G. had traveled in a number of countries; the passport had been stamped many times. All of a sudden, the secretary exclaimed, 'Sir, the date for the renewal of your passport is fast approaching. It's good that you've come here.'

U.G. had not looked into his passport carefully before. Whenever it was required, he presented it, but he never noticed the renewal date. It was renewed the last time in 1959 in America. That means five years had elapsed.

'Sir, the Vice-Consul told me that you would write a letter. Take these blank sheets of paper and envelope and finish your letter. I have to attend to some other business. We'll work out the money matters later,' so saying, he handed U.G. some paper and an envelope. U.G. went into the lounge to write his letter. But the pen did not write well as the ink in it ran out. He went to the front desk and asked the lady there politely, 'Will you please lend me a pen?' in French.

The Swiss lady instantly picked up a pen from the desk and gave it to him wondering if he really knew French.

U.G. asked himself to whom should he write to ask for money for a ticket. A number of names suggested themselves, but he could not settle on anyone. Finally two persons came to his mind ~ Rohit Mehta in Banaras and L.A. Bhave in Thane, Bombay. Which of these two should he write to?

As was his wont, U.G. settled the question by tossing a coin. The toss came up with the name of Bhave. Immediately, he scribbled a letter with the borrowed pen.

The Swiss lady was watching U.G. and his strange actions with keen interest. She was used to seeing a number of visitors come and go everyday, but no one especially interested her. For some reason, she was drawn to U.G.

U.G. finished the letter, folded it, put it in the envelope and sealed the envelope before he went back to the front desk to return the pen. He said to the lady 'many thanks.' He mailed the letter in the mail box within the precinct of the consulate.

Then he came back to the secretary who asked him, 'How much cash do you need?' U.G. thought for a while: the pending hotel bill was 200 Swiss francs. His living expenses for a month may amount to about 200 francs. So he declared, 'I need 400 francs.'

The secretary made a note of U.G.'s passport number and his permanent address on a separate paper. 'Sir, now you have to execute a promissory note in the name of our President, Dr. Radhakrishnan, mentioning that you have borrowed 400 Swiss francs from him to be repaid later with interest,' said the secretary. U.G. was surprised. 'What, I have to sign a promissory note?' 'Yes, indeed. Those are the rules.'

The secretary had the required papers prepared and put them before U.G. to sign them. U.G. did not read the contents of the promissory note; so he didn't know the terms of the loan. He signed the papers in his usual fashion. The secretary then instructed the cashier to pay U.G. 400 francs. In a few moments the money had arrived. The secretary gave the money to U.G. asking him to count it. But U.G. never did.

U.G. darted out of the embassy and looked for a taxi. After five minutes, he got into one and directed it to the hotel. The manager was surprised to see U.G. so soon. U.G. paid off his bill and collected his luggage, including his portable typewriter, his prized possession of many years. He went back to the consulate in the same taxi.

On the way, he recalled all the incidents that had taken place in the consulate since that morning. He had expected certain things to happen but destiny had different things in store for him.

The taxi stopped before the consulate. U.G. paid the fare, picked up his luggage and walked in. It was 1:30 pm in the afternoon and the sun was hot. The grounds of the consulate had an attractive flower garden as well as a number of tall trees. Birds of various species were clamoring and hopping from one branch another.

As soon as U.G. had arrived, a messenger boy came forward and said, 'Sir, I am asked to take you to the nearby guesthouse as soon as you came, and also to bring you to the Vice-Consul's home for lunch.' So saying, he tried to take the luggage from U.G.'s hands. He said, 'No, no, this is not too heavy for me; I can carry it,' and tried to avoid his service.

In the guesthouse, U.G. placed his luggage on a stool near the closet. He went to the bathroom and refreshed himself. He put on a *kurta*, *pajama* and a waistcoat in the Indian style.

The Vice-Consul was waiting for U.G. in the verandah of his residence. U.G. and his host entered the living room. The room was decorated with Indian artwork. Silk curtains were draped the French windows. There were several sofas, engraved teapoys and a large chandelier. In the hall, there was a large Kashmir carpet. A statue of Nataraja was placed in the center of the room. On either side of the door stood brass lamp stands. In the corners of the room some ancient artifacts could be seen. There was a large bookshelf on the one side and on the other side there were telephones on a table. Rajasthani miniature paintings in beautiful frames hung on the wall. The photos of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Radhakrishnan and Lal Bahadur Sastri were also mounted on the walls.

'Please sit down,' said the Vice-Consul showing U.G. a sofa. They had a casual conversation about world affairs. They briefly discussed issues such as the war with China, the changes in India after the death of Nehru and India's relations with Pakistan. U.G. expressed his opinions candidly in an emphatic manner.

Lunch was announced. They both entered the dining hall. The wife of the Vice-Consul walked in and was introduced to U.G. She was dressed in the usual Indian way in Punjabi style. She had a beautiful oblong face, brown complexion and large eyes, and she wore a vermilion mark in the space between her eyebrows. A bit of vermilion was also placed just above the forehead at the parting of her hair as an insignia of a married woman. She invited U.G. to the table.

U.G. glanced at all the eatables and thought, 'These are enough for me for a whole lifetime.' He ate very little. After finishing lunch, U.G. took leave of the host. 'Thank you madame, I am highly thankful for your kindness. From now on, a smaller quanity of food would do quite well for me.'

U.G. took leave of them and went to the guest room. After resting for ten or fifteen minutes he came out of the guesthouse and strolled around the garden.

Meanwhile, after U.G. left the consulate, the Swiss lady at the front desk enquired about U.G. She came to know that he had borrowed some money and was staying as a guest of the Vice-Consul. Her thoughts centered on U.G. When U.G. sat in the lounge again she watched him closely.

Though U.G. sat there calmly, his mind was churning and running in several directions. 'Now the die is cast; it's almost certain that I'll go back to India. How fantastic it would be if some sudden change took place in my fortunes!' he thought. He was like a lone marooned man who still has a ray of hope, although his chances of being rescued are slim. U.G.'s mind swung endlessly, like a fast-moving pendulum, in two different directions – he was ready to fly back to India; yet it was an anathema to be in India.

* * * * * * *

Swami Nityabodhananda entered the consulate with another man and noticed U.G. sitting alone in the lounge. The Swami walked towards U.G. Noticing him, U.G. stood up and greeted him smiling. The Swami instructed his companion, 'My passport might be ready. Please look to it.' The man left the scene.

'Would you mind taking a small walk with me?' asked Swamiji politely. 'By all means, with pleasure,' replied U.G. They both walked into the garden.

'In the morning, I talked to the Vice-Consul about you. I asked him to help you as much as he could. I understand that he has a liking for you. I hope your needs will be taken care of,' said Swamiji.

U.G. was surprised at the kind attention of Swamiji. 'I am really grateful to you for your generous feelings.'

'In the morning, while browsing your file, I learned that you have helped in the preparation and publication of Swami Vivekananda Centenary Souvenir at the Ramakrishna Mission in London. I have seen the souvenir; I liked it very much,' declared Swamiji.

'Yes, Swami Ghanananda treated me very kindly. He is an embodiment of gentleness, love and affection. It was my great fortune to be associated with him for some time,' replied U.G. remembering his London days.

There was silence for a few moments. After a pause, Swamiji said, 'I can sympathize with you. You seem to be very much out of gear. I feel that you need some rest and relaxation. Perhaps you could have such a peaceful place in India.'

U.G. did not reply. Meanwhile his associate came: 'your passport is renewed, sir; you may come and sign for it,' he informed.

Swamiji looked at U.G. kindly, took out some money from his hand bag and gave it to him, 'Please accept this small amount without hesitation.'

U.G. was pleasantly surprised and accepted it. He did not know how to express his heartfelt appreciation to Swamiji. He had been a great speaker a long time ago, but at the present moment he could not utter a single word, as though he were dumb.

After a pause, U.G. opened his mouth 'Swamiji, I am unable to express myself in words. I am really moved by your great humane gesture.'

'No, no, don't attribute to me all those great things. I always act as my intuition dictates. That's all.'

A few moments later, Swamiji held both U.G.'s hands and stood silently as if invoking a divine blessing. He patted U.G. on his shoulders and declared, 'Krishnamurti, may Sri Ramakrishna bless you. Tomorrow I'm leaving for London. Good luck!' So saying, Swamiji left with his associate to sign the passport papers.

* * * * * * * * *

Some incidents take place unexpectedly and change the lifecourse of an individual radically. Perhaps it can be said that there are no true accidents. If a coincidence is traced back far enough it might perhaps turn out to be an inevitable event. The memorable incident that was going to take place in the Indian consulate might rank as one.

'I am Valentine de Kerven; I work in this office as a translator,' the Swiss lady at the reception introduced herself to U.G., looking at him gracefully and compassionately. Hearing her mellifluous voice, U.G. got up and gazed at her.

Valentine was about sixty years of age. She was a little stout, of average height and of a light brown complexion. She had straight short hair parted on the side and her style of hair gave a peculiar attraction to her broad forehead. She had a small attractive and firmly-set mouth which hinted at stubbornness. Her eyes were deeply set, but not sunken.

Valentine had sharp looks; she could gauge others' depth and character. Her thin nose has deep nostrils. But her eyebrows were sleek and curved. Her ears were large. When she closed her thin lips, they appeared like a bow. Valentine seemed like a strong-willed person with an unshakable self–confidence. She looked like a nun with a sublime demeanor.

The words "God", "religion", "devotion to God", "fear of sin", or "spiritual contemplation" had no place in her dictionary of life. She neither attended the church nor read the Bible. She believed religion is like chasing a mirage. She was only accountable to her conscience, not to anyone else. She was in tune with life and guided by its spirit. She indulged at times in critical self-examination.

Motherly compassion was her prized possession, as if she could shelter, nurture and nurse many a tired soul in her large heart. It was her virtue to smile like an infant innocently and purely without a trace of selfishness. When she smiles her eyes were partly closed.

Valentine continued: 'I heard in the morning that you wanted to go back to India by being repatriated. I also learned that the Vice-Consul is reluctant to comply with your request as your credentials are high and that he loaned you some money. Normally, I don't poke my nose into others' affairs. But on seeing you sitting here, I didn't feel like remaining indifferent. Though you appear to be normal, there is something churning in you. May I know what your actual problem is?' she concluded softly in a sympathetic voice. She asked U.G. to sit in a chair and she sat in the opposite chair.

Her English had a French accent. She stressed every word and it was rather difficult for others to understand her words easily. But U.G. was familiar with such English.

U.G. was surprised seeing a stranger suddenly approach him and introduce herself to him. He never usually bothered others by disclosing his personal details and trying to elicit their sympathy. He kept silent for a while. Valentine looked steadily at him and said, 'I'm sorry if I've offended you. But I am thinking that maybe I could be of help to you in some way if I know your pressing problem.'

After a long pause, U.G. confided: 'I thank you very much for your kind words. I am U.G. Krishnamurti from India. I really don't know where I should begin. I am a drifter like a gypsy. My background starts with giving lectures all over the world. Somehow, somewhere along the track, things went awry. I started on a downward spiral and ended in a helpless state.' He raised his head and continued: 'In between, many unpleasant things have tumbled over me.... I am unable to explain coherently this critical situation in which I am caught,' he completed with his usual gestures.

Valentine was pleased by his gesticulations and facial expressions, though she could not fathom a single word of what he said. But his expressions were more expressive than his words. She was attracted by his eyes which were even keel and looked as if they were the focal point of his being. What mystery lay in them?

There was a sudden change in the weather outside. They both looked out the window. There were black clouds here and there in the sky. There was a cold breeze, and presently a shower started. The sun was peeping out of the clouds and the raindrops on leaves glittered like pearls. The sun was golden in color and birds were hovering around the sky. On the one side of the sky, there was a faint rainbow in the clouds. The showers ceased suddenly and the sun shone brightly again. The rainbow gradually disappeared. Multi-colored butterflies flew in the sun's rays. The young chicks of birds were clamoring in the nests on the trees, perhaps due to fear of changed weather, or they were simply calling for their mothers.

Valentine examined U.G.'s face and asked, 'Would you please briefly describe your problem in plain language?'

'The problem...the problem...is,' he stopped.

Valentine looked at him keenly once again and asked, 'You said that your name is Krishnamurti. I hear that name frequently in this area. You're...'

U.G. interrupted her and clarified: 'No, no, I am not that Krishnamurti you are thinking of. He is J. Krishnamurti. He is a world famous philosopher; he tours the world giving discourses. You must have heard of *him*. I am U.G. Krishnamurti; there is no connection between the two of us except the name.'

'Oh, I see. I see his name frequently in the newspapers. The Saanen Valley area is his summer resort.' Then she recalled something in her mind and remarked, 'Yes, now I know, he is a philosopher.'

U.G. asked her inquisitively, 'Have you attended any of his talks?'

'I have not attended. I have no interest in philosophy. Some of my friends have attended and they have spoken about him. That's all.' She continued: 'In my view it's foolish and childish to search for solutions for day-to-day problems through questions and answers or lengthy discourses.'

A long silence followed. All of a sudden, Valentine exclaimed, 'Do you have any objection if I call you "U.G."?' U.G. was pleasantly surprised and replied, 'No, none at all. In fact, all my close friends call me "U.G".' Breaking the silence Valentine went on: 'U.G., you appear like an ordinary person, but something in my heart is telling me that you are extraordinary. May I know what your main problem is? Why do you think there is no solution to your problem, if I may ask?' U.G. answered:

'Well, as I already told you, it's a long story. I wouldn't know where to begin and where to end. It started with some sort of spiritual search, from the known to the unknown. In my exploration, I rebelled against everything and rejected it. I discarded many experiences. I doubted everything, including myself. Still, my questions have remained unanswered. Gradually my enthusiasm had ebbed away and it is in this suspended state that I am currently in.'

He paused for a moment and continued in an impersonal manner:

'In other words, after a number of wrecks in this journey to an unknown destination, unexpectedly I came to Geneva and stayed in a hotel for a few days. And I could not pay the hotel bill. Then I approached the Vice-Consul and requested him to repatriate me to India. Knowing my background as a reputed speaker from India, he declined my request and asked me to write to India and get some money for the airticket. He said till then I could be his guest. I borrowed four hundred francs from the consulate and paid my bill. For a month to come I have a temporary shelter. And I have no idea what will come next. Under the present circumstances, going back to India is like facing a cyclone at its most violent time. Somehow, I don't want to be in India and search for a new life there, starting from the scratch, though I am quite capable of it. I am caught in a dilemma. I wish I could avoid going to India, but my options are almost nil.

Valentine heard U.G. with total attention. 'If you don't like to go to India, then don't go. In my view, it's not a problem. I will show a solution to your problem, if it is agreeable to you,' she said. U.G. was flabbergasted for a moment at her words and looked at her intently.

U.G. kept silent. Then he suddenly asked, 'Did you ever visit India?'

'Yes, in 1954, as a tourist I traveled in a car from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. I saw many interesting things on my tour. I visited many temples in India. Common people fascinated me more than the rich. I visited Mysore City and its beautiful gardens. I think it was in Madras that an artefact interested me ~ it was a cot on which coarse twine was woven. I purchased it and brought it back with me,' she said with a winning smile. On hearing about it, U.G. laughed. He asked, 'After touring the whole country you only brought a cot as a souvenir?' She nodded and said, 'Of course, I also brought some sandalwood things from Mysore.'

There was a silence between them for a few moments as if they lacked words to communicate. Breaking the silence she interjected, 'U.G., don't rack your brains any more. Believe me; you are not going to India. You are going to stay right here in Geneva. If not here, it will be somewhere else. But you can forget about India,' she said reassuringly.

U.G. wondered how it was going to be possible. He looked askance at her. 'U.G., from today you will be my guest. You can stay with me as long as you wish to live here without any hesitation. Trust me; you are going to lead your life calmly and peacefully. I don't know who you are, where you come from, what your background is or what your future plans are. I am least interested in knowing all those details. They are irrelevant to me. In the ongoing journey of life you can travel with me as a co-traveller. OK?'

By a single stroke Valentine altered U.G.'s entire life, as if a divine messenger had interceded. Was this merely an accident?

When he heard these words U.G. could not utter a single word in reply. But his eyes and facial expressions acknowledged her gesture with gratitude. U.G. was transformed into another man from that day on. Valentine's compassion remolded him.

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Without any effort a seed is carried in the air to some place and the mother earth receives it wholeheartedly. The seed gradually germinates in the soil and the earth provides all the nourishment to the plant and helps it grow.

Without his choice, unknowingly, a man slips into a state of total surrender; then life itself drives him forward automatically toward his destiny.

Valentine had become a beacon of light in U.G.'s life voyage. In the recorded spiritual history of mankind the example of Valentine is unprecedented and unparalleled. U.G.'s life is now ready to blossom freely in its destined way.

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U.G. remembered what he must do immediately. He went to the secretary of the Vice-Consul. The secretary said that the Vice-Consul went out with a delegation from India. But U.G. only wanted to repay the four hundred francs he had borrowed earlier that day. The secretary was taken aback.

'I can understand your surprise. In the afternoon Swami Nityabodhananda gave me four hundred and fifty francs. My loan should be cleared some day or other, so why not today?' said U.G. He placed the money on the table. The secretary asked his clerk to credit the amount to U.G.'s account.

U.G. rose to take his leave. 'Wait, sir,' said the secretary and, writing a small note on the promissory note, handed it to U.G. for his signature. U.G. signed it and gave it back to him. He thanked the secretary and walked into the garden outside the consulate. The office would be closed in a few minutes.

Outside, the lawn's greenery was reflected in U.G. eyes. The manicured lawn was soft like a silk tassel. Around the lawn there were a number of flowerpots with geraniums, blue carnations, dahlias and other flowers in them. The sun was still rather bright. In some places in the garden honeysuckle flowers were drawing attention. There were a few poplars in the compound.

U.G. sauntered in the garden for sometime and went to his guest room. The employees of the office were leaving one after another. Valentine closed the reception desk and walked out of the building.

She walked toward the guestroom where U.G. was. He was sitting alone in a sofa in a yogic posture. 'What are you doing here alone?' enquired Valentine entering. On seeing her, U.G. got up saying, 'Come on in,' with a smile.

Valentine sat in her chair and a feeble smile on her face reflected his greeting. U.G. sensed trouble. He lifted his head and cast a searching glance at her. Her eyes looked downward rather timidly, as though she had just fought a grim battle. 'What's the matter? In the morning when I met you, you were not like this. What has happened in this short time?' enquired U.G. on a note of surprise.

Valentine kept silent and avoided his looks. She shook her head several times indicating nothing was serious.

'This person has been bossing over me. No matter what he thinks or does or says, he only loves himself.' After a pause, she said again, 'It's a long story. This is not the time to tell you about it. Now I want to take you with me to my house. Let's go.'

'Why to-day? You seem to be tired. I'll come tomorrow,' replied U.G.

'No, no, there's no problem. Let's go," she insisted.

They both came out of the Vice-Consul's house. It was already dark. The city of Geneva started her nightlife.

There was heavy traffic on the streets. The buses were crowded and there were no taxis readily available. U.G. and Valentine walked for a few minutes. Valentine looked at her watch and decided to go on a bus. After half-an-hour, both of them got off the bus, walked along the pavement for a little distance and then turned into a lane. The area appeared to be part of old Geneva City. Within a few minutes, they approached a building complex.

Valentine and U.G. walked up the steps to her house: 'The door is not open; that means, he is not in,' she told herself.

She opened the door with her key and turned the lights on. She asked U.G. to sit in the living room and went into her bedroom. She refreshed herself and after changing she got busy preparing some snacks in the kitchen.

She got a plate ready with some snacks, arranging them artistically, and placed the plate in a large tray along with some tea in a kettle and boiled milk in another cup. She walked into the living room holding the tray with both her hands. Now her face was somewhat calm, as she had shed many things and buried "that morning incident".

U.G. had been browsing some papers; now he had put them aside on the teapoy. They both ate the snacks. U.G. ate a little to be polite and drank the tea. They sat quietly.

'U.G., I have some business in the bank. I will be back within an hour. Then both of us can go out to a restaurant for dinner. Would you mind waiting for me?' she asked.

'By all means, please carry on; meanwhile I will browse these issues of the *National Geographic*.'

Valentine took the tray inside and darted out. U.G. went through the magazines for some time and got up from his seat. He went to the bathroom to wash his face and looked in the Belgian mirror. 'Where is my head?' What a strange thing! He was able to see his head clearly in the mirror, but as usual he did not have any experience of having it. He laughed within himself. Somehow he adapted himself to this weird of feeling of his head being absent.

U.G. walked around the house. The rooms were wide with a high ceiling in the French style. In the hall, on the one side, there were oil paintings and line diagrams hanging on the wall; and on the other side, there were photographs of Valentine, one on a motorcycle, another in a military uniform and a third of her with a smile sitting among some gypsies. On one side of the wall, there was a hearth, and by the side of it, a number of firewood pieces were stacked. In a corner of the room there was an old

piano. In another corner there was a large bookshelf containing several French books. A few books of the books were in English. Some of the books dealt with photography and garment design while some others were about stage make-up, acting and directing.

U.G. noticed a photo album among the books. He picked it out carefully and opened it. He saw in it photographs of familiar monuments in India and of natural scenery. The Taj Mahal, Red Fort in Delhi, the Maharajah's Palace in Mysore, the stone elephant sculptures of Mahabalipuram and many ancient temples of South India were among the subjects of the photographs. The photographs must have been taken when she visited India in 1954. There were many photos of women in their local attire. The Bible or books on religion or philosophy were conspicuously absent.

U.G. then went into the dining room. On the dining table an artistically knit lace tablecloth was spread. Near the wall a cabinet contained glass and porcelain ware neatly arranged.

U.G. noticed that in the bedroom, there were two rosewood beds. There were a few enlarged photographs mounted on the walls, mostly silhouettes. In one of them a child was mounted on an old woman's shoulder. The woman was smiling and looking mysteriously. Only the head of the child was visible in the photograph. In another, there was a tree with many branches spread out but with no leaves on them. The branches appeared to project toward the sky as if in prayer. On the topmost branch a single bird spread its wings about to perch.

Adjacent to the bedroom there was another small bedroom for the guests. It had two beds and again there were various photos hanging on the wall. Among them, there was a striking photograph of Valentine in military uniform and another in a nurse's uniform. Hanging by their side was also a picture of her seated on a camel with another person. A photo of her sitting majestically on a motorcycle was mounted near the door.

Between this bedroom and the living room there was a hallway. A cupboard in the hallway contained a number of dolls and artifacts.

U.G. returned to the drawing room and sat in the sofa. There was a silence in the house. Within a short while, he heard footsteps at the door. Valentine came in. She carried some packages in her hands and looked quite cheerful. She quickly placed the packages on a table. She replaced old flowers in a vase with fresh ones.

Then they went to a restaurant for dinner in a taxi. After dinner Valentine dropped U.G. off in the guesthouse and returned to her own house. That night she had a sound sleep.

Everyday, after office hours, Valentine would come to see U.G. and they would go out for dinner. They frequented different restaurants in Geneva. Valentine was a non-vegetarian by choice while U.G. was a vegetarian. He mostly ate cheese-based items, oat meal and vegetables. He was not fond of fruit juices but drank creamed coffee.

Once, Valentine queried U.G. about his food habits. U.G. explained: 'The majority of Indians are non-vegetarian. Most of their food habits are based on their culture and religion.'

That day, it was a holiday for Valentine. She locked her house and went to meet a friend in the morning. She spent the day with her and at about 7.00 pm she went to the guesthouse to pick up U.G. A few minutes later, they together went to Valentine's house.

When they arrived there, the door of the house was open, which didn't augur well for Valentine. Valentine's heart fluttered a moment. The smell of burning cigar wafted through the bedroom. That indicated, '"He" has come'. How dare he? Did he come alone? Or....' She suppressed her raging emotions and appeared calm.

Leaving U.G. in the living room, she whirled into the bedroom. There was a hefty man drinking something alcoholic; he had already consumed a bottle. He held a lighted cigar in his left hand. He looked at Valentine closing his left eye oddly and grunted like an animal. That was his way of greeting her. Then he returned to his drinking.

Valentine's pent-up emotions all came to the surface in spite of her feeble attempts to suppress them. Her every limb was trembling. His very presence triggered the reaction. How dare he! She thundered like a raging Spanish bull:

'Schwab, I told you so many times not to come to my house. You have no right to come here. Our relationship had come to the end ages ago. Did you bring that whore along with you, you shameless creature?'

The man did not reply. Meanwhile, Valentine heard the sound of someone coughing in the adjacent room. She peeped in. In the corner of the room a woman sat nonchalantly with a timid face. Valentine was overcome by a sudden feeling shame. She felt her power of resistance slowly ebbing away.

She came back to Schwab and shouted contemptuously, 'My house has become a bordello; you don't have any self-respect left? You are hell-bent to ruin my reputation among my kith and kin. You destroyed my amicable relationship with my sisters.' She thus vented her feelings.

Schwab did not stir from his place. His silence aggravated her rage further, but she controlled herself. 'A respectable gentleman has come with me. What a disgrace! I told you time and again not to bring her into my house. You both get out of my house. Do whatever you like, but leave me alone, you understand!' Yelling furiously Valentine went into the kitchen.

Schwab was silent. He had been used to her contempt and insults. None of it touched him.

After a while he lifted his heavy body from the seat; he was curious to see the "respectable gentleman." He gingerly walked into the drawing room and looked at U.G., tilting his head sideways.

U.G. was reading a newspaper. On seeing Schwab, he kept it aside, stood up and greeted him politely with a smile. Schwab nodded awkwardly.

Schwab's hair was "salt-and-pepper" grey; it was shabby but combed. His face was dirty and unshaven. He wore a muffler around his neck. He had a double chin. His cheeks were hanging and wrinkled. His forehead reflected a mean disposition. He had large ears and one of them was a little bent sideways. His nose was angular like the pointed beak of an eagle. His nostrils were like small caves signifying greed. His lips were thick and rough. His eyes were sunken and bloodshot. Under his eyes there were lines like chicken feet. He walked with his head bent sideways and looked at others like a hunter who gazed at his prey. His behavior was mercurial. He always tried to hide his shortcomings, pitfalls and perversity from others. He carried with him an animosity toward society. It was a wonder how a beautiful woman like Valentine ever married him at all.

Schwab went back to the bedroom and opened a third bottle. Meanwhile, Valentine prepared some coffee and offered it to U.G., along with some snacks, in a tray. They both had their snacks and coffee together and sat silently. U.G. observed that Valentine was under great stress. She could not conceal her grimace. Valentine left the room with the cups and plates in the tray.

The other woman was making her presence more and more conspicuous. Valentine felt awkward. She herself lived an audacious life, but was beyond reproach. Now she was making a monumental effort to restrain herself and maintain some decency before the guest. Due to accumulated frustration and humiliation, a strong sense of dejection set in her. By nature she was quite accommodative and adaptive and was not of a rash temperament. But in the present embroiled situation, her rebellious thoughts refused to budge. This never happened in her sixty years of life.

She closed her fists tightly and pressed her feet firmly to the ground to overcome her anger. But her pride and honor were at stake. She was caught in her anger like a fly in a spider's web. She exploded on Schwab: 'When you were roaming in the streets of Paris as a penniless wastrel, I gave you shelter and nurtured you. I transformed you into a respectable person. But now you have turned into an ungrateful traitor. Even that I tolerated. But tolerance has its limits. You have crossed them by bringing that cheap whore into my house to live with her here. I can't tolerate this. You've squandered my money. I won't give you even a single sou any more. Live your own life and let me live mine. Get out of this house and take that woman with you, now!' she demanded.

Valentine's harsh words had no effect on Schwab. He was totally in his own inebriated state. His reckless demeanor made her more aggressive. She shouted in a high-pitched voice, 'Cursed be the land you were born in, you wily cheat; cursed be the criminal race you belong to. I can't go on fighting and crying for ever. I will drag you to the court;

there your rights and mine will be decided. Send her out of my house; I can't stand her presence. If you don't, I'll call the police.'

Sitting in the drawing room U.G. overheard Valentine. "This seems like a family quarrel. He must be her husband. Because of his association with that other woman, the husband and wife are fighting. It's not fair for me to stay here any longer,' so thinking, U.G. got up from his seat and walked slowly toward Valentine to take leave of her.

While passing by the other room he took a look at the woman in the room. She was in her early twenties, appeared pale and petrified. She stuck to a corner in the room like an unwanted object. She was in a state of anxiety. She appeared to be in an advanced stage of pregnancy. U.G. was sorry to see her sorry condition.

He entered the bedroom and found Schwab sitting like a shaggy human baggage. Valentine was standing before him like a wounded tigress. She became embarassed on seeing U.G. She came out of the room expressing her apologies: 'I'm so sorry, U.G., all this has happened so unexpectedly. He is my so-called husband and he has had a total showdown. He has been having an affair with a woman and has brought her here. He's trying to dictate terms as if he has some rights. He is proposing to live with the three of us together. How could it be? I told him several times not to bring her into my house. Let them go out and live elsewhere but never here. I feel ashamed with her presence here. I am insisting that at least she should be sent away,' she explained.

U.G. maintained a deep silence, and, after a long pause, he said softly in a pacifying tone, 'Valentine, I can understand everything and sympathize with your wounded feelings as well. If you don't think that I am interfering with your family affairs, I will make a humble suggestion....' Valentine knotted her eyebrows and nodded indicating her willingness to listen to his suggestion. 'Keeping aside the rights and wrongs, the woman seems to be in an advanced state of pregnancy. If you force her out at this hour, where will she go? He's drunk beyond his senses and cannot move at the moment. So, have pity on her and, as a woman, be sympathetic to her sad condition and allow her to stay for the night. You seem to be generous and compassionate by nature. It would be a great humanitarian gesture on your part,' he pleaded.

Valentine raised her eyebrows with astonishment at this suggestion. U.G.'s suggestion had its desired effect. She peevishly calmed herself. She had second thoughts about the situation.

U.G. took leave of her saying goodbye and slowly walked out. At the entrance he saw a cat walking leisurely and coming into the house. This is not the first time that U.G. ran into that cat. Was Valentine fond of cats?

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For U.G. the days rambled on as usual. The deadline given by the Vice-Consul to U.G. to stay in his guesthouse was approaching shortly. Some of the staff at the Indian consulate was baffled by how fast U.G.'s friendship with Valentine had grown.

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One day, U.G. was sitting alone in his room and browsing the *Time* magazine. Usually Valentine came around 5:30 pm everyday, but that day she did not show up. At about 6:30, she suddenly barged in. U.G. put aside the magazine and greeted her. She appeared quite different that day, not her usual self.

She sat very opposite him in a sofa. U.G. looked at her curiously. He had no inkling of what she was about to do in the next few minutes. Her very presence had an air of mystery. She wore a pure white dress, smooth and sparkling, as if she had descended from the very sky like an angel.

She held a plastic folder in her hand. She exclaimed, unfolding her heart, 'U.G., this is for you,' and gave the folder to U.G. The folder contained a bank passbook. U.G. casually opened the passbook and turned its pages. For a moment, he could not believe what he saw. He looked at Valentine with wonder. Valentine seemed compelled to act by destiny.

U.G. and Valentine hailed from diverse backgrounds, cultures and religions. Yet they transcended all barriers of color, creed and caste. Some persons are destined to be architects of others' fortunes. The probation period of U.G. had come to an end on a fertile note. In 1925, when U.G. was seven years old, he went to the *Kaumara Nadi* astrologer in Madras, along with his grandfather, Pantulu. It was mentioned in the *Nadi* that 'He will be helped by a woman who will help him to establish himself in foreign lands permanently.' How could this event have been predicted 39 years before? It was a mind-boggling prediction. In the name of U.G. Krishnamurti twenty thousand francs were deposited in a Swiss bank, as the passbook revealed. It was a *coup de grace* and a *coup de Bonheur*!

Valentine had no belief in the doctrine of pre-destination of Calvinism which prevailed in some parts of Swiss religious thinking. Religious thinking was totally alien to her.

This mysterious phenomenon needs a different term to describe it. Could it be called "synchronicity"? When a man goes into a higher state of awareness these synchronistic events occur and accelerate almost to a point that might make them seem miraculous. The term, first used by C. G. Jung, suggests that there is an interconnectedness or unity of casually in seemingly unrelated events.

50. The Story of Valentine

(The Daring Journey In the Womb of Life)

There is a mountain range called Jura. In that area, in a village called La Chaux-de-Fonds, on 1st August 1901, Valentine was born as the second child of de Kervens. Valentine's elder sister, Adrian Pedote, was born in 1896. Their younger sister Rose Jocket was born in 1906. It was a strange co-incidence that the birthday of Valentine was also the National Day of the Swiss people.

Valentine's ancestry included a number of famous people in Europe – scientists, musicians, scholars and men of adventure. The de Kerven family was well-known for its culture, character and religious values. The mother of Valentine was born in a respectable family; she had a great flair for religion. Valentine's paternal grandfather was a priest. The family belonged to a Protestant sect. The father of Valentine, named Alfred de Kerven, was a great neurosurgeon in Switzerland. He was famous for his research in brain tumors and published a valuable book on the subject. The book was popular in Europe. The book was translated into twenty different languages. He conducted research on a disease named after him – the "de Kerven syndrome" – and his publications related to this subject had an important place in the annals of medicine.

Valentine was more attached to her father than to her mother. Right from her childhood, her father had been a role model to her. Her two sisters were closer to their mother. Valentine demonstrated a sharp intellect and keen understanding even in her childhood. She was active, cheerful and enthusiastic. Dr. de Kerven noticed her thirst for creativity and capacity for learning. People around her were often surprised at her skill in domestic work, sewing, knitting, painting and other arts. She was at the top in her class in school. She was kind and friendly toward poor children; sometimes she also offered help to the needy.

Her mother attributed her noble behavior to her Christian upbringing. She believed that Valentine should be molded according to religious principles, including total devotion to God.

While growing up, Valentine observed the role of women in the Swiss society. They had all responsibilities and but no rights. They were governed by dogmatic rules and restrictions. In the name of tradition, women were turned into slaves of the household. It was strange that in a country which was known worldwide for freedom of choice, liberty and independence, women did not have even the right to vote. They were treated as a chattel, only meant for enjoyment and cooking, and as machines to bear children. Male domination was unquestioned. In the name of orthodox religion women were tortured and trampled by men whenever they raised their heads in protest. Observing these appalling conditions Valentine became restless and somewhat depressed.

It was against her nature to be confined to one place pirouetting in rigid surroundings. She was not interested in living in the traditional manner like other Swiss women –

getting married, begetting and raising children and managing household affairs. So she sought ways of escaping from the traditional cage.

To do this, first she had to be free from her entanglements. Perhaps then her creative afflatus and latent artistic talents might be actualized. But how could she break the shackles?

'I should develop my talents and search for creative outlets; then perhaps I'll become famous,' she thought to herself. She began to read classics in French like the works of Voltaire, Rousseau, Balzac, Émile Zola, etc. The plays of Henrik Ibsen provided new ideas in her mind. She was now attuned to a different philosophy of life based on rational, logical and pragmatic considerations and radical humanistic ideas which did not include the idea of God. The concept of God never played in important role in her thought world. To her mind, God was irrelevant in the scheme of things.

While Valentine was avidly waiting to find her fortunes in an unbridled free life, Mrs. Kerven anxiously planned to educate her daughter in the lines of her paternal grandfather, with a view to help her lead a religious life. One day, she declared, 'My dear child, for a long time I have been pondering over your future life. I would like you follow the footsteps of your grandfather and surrender yourself to the Lord. There is a great contentment and purposefulness of life in the service of the Lord.'

Valentine was shocked with the proposal of her mother, as if the sky opened above her. She gave no answer. After a long pause, she answered flatly, 'For me that's unthinkable; I detest the very idea.'

'Why? You are eligible in every respect to lead a pious life. All the Christian principles are imbedded you: you are kind, service-minded and generous and patient,' she explained, 'your grandfather was such a noble and virtuous person who devoted and surrendered all his life to the service of the Lord; such a fortune is limited to a chosen few.'

The glorious life of her grandfather did not touch Valentine. 'I followed you to the church in my childhood days. But my mind was never influenced by that way of life. Absolutely, I have no inclination to lead a religious life like my dear grandfather,' she pronounced emphatically.

Her mother was visibly embarrassed and shocked by her daughter's views and decision. What went wrong in her upbringing? When Valentine put on a white dress, she appeared like an impeccable Virgin Mary. Now she was declaring that she had nothing to do with the religious way of life. What an irony!

Valentine had other thoughts and decided to express her views without mincing words. Breaking the silence, she went on, 'Mother, I strongly believe that my life will be limited within the framework of religion. For me religion is suffocating. Life has vast, illimitable opportunities to fulfill my aspirations.'

Mrs. Kerven was stupefied. We don't know why she chose Valentine among her three daughters to be introduced to the religious way of life. She tried to wriggle out of her encounter with her daughter and pretended as if nothing had happened.

It was a Sunday. Dr. de Kerven came from Zurich. Valentine's mother returned from the church followed by her two daughters. The weather was chilly and windy. All the members of the family sat around the dining table and had their lunch. After lunch, Valentine helped her mother with the dishes and sat back at the table. Dr. de Kerven was relaxing, sipping brandy and smoking a pipe. Valentine was silent and tightlipped.

Valentine cleared her voice and said to her father, 'Father, today I'd like to speak out my mind to you: ever since my childhood you have inspired me and helped my mental development. You know my passion for the arts. I want to go out and develop my creative side and make a mark. I would like to go to Paris where there will be many opportunities to fulfill my goals.'

Mrs. de Kerven, who had been sitting in a sofa hearing the conversation, was aghast at hearing her daughter's words. Pedote stopped her knitting and turned towards her sister. The atmosphere was heavy. Mrs. de Kerven recovered from the shock and rose to her feet, 'How stupid could you be? Here is a Swiss girl of eighteen going to Paris to live all alone, defying all conventions and religious codes; it's unthinkable!'

Valentine replied, 'My decision is well thought out and not based on emotion. I have weighed the pros and cons of the situation. My decision is final.' There followed arguments and counter-arguments between mother and daughter.

Dr. de Kerven was silently listening to the arguments put forth by both of them. He was in a dilemma; he could not support either his daughter or his wife. But he was surprised at Valentine's determination. She seemed as powerful as she was beautiful and ready to explore life.

The next morning, her mother approached her in an entreating manner and said, 'I understand your artistic inclinations. Surely you are bright, intelligent and inventive. I also appreciate your urge to achieve something. But the city of Paris is not a place to rush to for young girls like you. Instead, you may want to study medicine like your father or do scientific research. Or you can take up teaching, which is a noble profession. All these are respectable professions in our society. Why don't you choose something like that?'

Valentine noticed and was surprised at her mother's change of stance. She wanted to avoid a combative approach and decided to win her mother over to her point of view. She said, 'Mother, I would very much like to explore my life according to my aptitude and find an identity of my own. Why did my father not follow priesthood like my grandfather? That fact only shows that it did not suit his temperament. He pursued his inclinations and studied medicine, in spite of heavy odds. Now he is well known in Europe as an outstanding figure in his field, is he not? If he had settled in a village or a town as a priest, could he have achieved the same name and fame in the medical world as he has now? My desire is a similar one. Please understand my point of view.'

Her mother kept quiet and closely followed her gesticulations with an enthusiastic frame of mind. Valentine further expanded, 'I derive a great satisfaction in designing garments. As everyone knows, Paris is the hub of haute couture in the world. I am not building sand castles. I know what I am up to. I am a strong-willed woman and do not easily yield to temptations. Please let me try my luck there. I will prove my mettle beyond doubt.'

Mrs. de Kerven, not convinced by her daughter's logic, argued feebly in her losing battle with her daughter and failed to persuade her. There was a deadlock.

Later, Dr. de Kerven had a long chat with his daughter separately. He too was stunned at his daughter's intractable attitude. He knew that she inherited her desire to live independently and her thirst for freedom from him. He pondered over the issue as honestly as he could. Finally, he assembled all his family members and announced: 'The decision of Valentine is a courageous one. It's also true that no teenage girl in our family history has taken such a radical decision before. But it doesn't mean that she is going to do something terrible. She has talents; and she has definite views and goals. She is eager to achieve something great in her life. This is something to be appreciated. Paris is the proper launching pad for creative people. It's our parental duty to respect her decision.'

Her mother was forced to agree. The meeting had taken place in Valentine's absence. When Valentine returned, her younger sister Rose, who had been tacitly supporting Valentine all along, reported, 'Good news, father prevailed over mother about your move to Paris.'

Valentine was in cloud nine. She nestled close to her father and kissed his forehead twice thanking him for his decision. She was touched by her father's nobility, broad-mindedness and unflinching moral support for her ambitions and decision.

Dr. Kerven watched his wife's sagging spirits and tried to set her mind at ease by saying, '*Dieu defend le droit*' (God supports all good deeds). Everything was resolved in Valentine's favor and she got busy with her preparations to leave for Paris.

The day arrived for Valentine's departure to Paris. The atmosphere in the house was tense. Mrs. Kerven was nervous and dispirited. She knelt and prayed. Dr. Kerven allotted 1,000 francs per year to his daughter.

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As a world capital Paris is matchless. For hundreds of years it has been a fountainhead of creative expression. It has also been a predominantly educational center and a paradise of intellectuals, in addition to being a gudgeon of philosophical activity. No artist, musician, painter, scholar or singer could gain recognition unless he or she visited and spent time in Paris. A number of painters, actors, musicians, philosophers and poets who have influenced human thought and expression spent their fruitful years in Paris. The visit to Paris is in itself an aesthetic delight and an artistic experience.

In 1918, the First World War was coming to an end. It was that year that Valentine touched the great city of Paris. The city was at the center of her dreams.
In the city of Paris, there were lodgings and boarding meant exclusively for women and organized by women. Valentine lodged in one of them near the River Seine. On the very first day, she met a Swiss national staying in the neighboring room. They became friends in their first encounter. The Swiss lady appreciated Valentine's courage in coming alone in search of a new way of living. She said, 'There is an enormous demand for fashion designers here. The great dress-making emporiums are everywhere. They have multiplied enormously since the War. If you want to succeed in the field of fashion, you must have creativity. There is a neck and neck competition in this field. Please join a fashion design school and study different methods and styles which are ever-changing.'

Valentine joined a school for designing garments. In the evenings, after her classes, she would stroll leisurely in the streets of Paris, watching the shop windows. She found Paris a woman's city.

Valentine completed her training in three months, to the amazement of her teachers, and started teaching classes for new students. She wanted to start an emporium of her own but waited for the right opportunity. She heard a lot about a famous lady who single-handedly built a huge empire of emporiums. She was fascinated by her life.

One fine day, Valentine started her own show with little fanfare; only a select few well-wishers were invited. In two weeks, to her utter surprise, only a few visited her show, though her designs were quite innovative. Where did it go wrong? She was disappointed. But she was confident and took the experience as a challenge.

Days rolled on and nothing had changed significantly. Valentine came to understand that it was not easy to make a dent in the ever-changing fashion field and make a niche for herself. She disposed off the unsold stock in the secondhand goods market at a loss. She changed the decor of the shop and made it more attractive. She worked tirelessly on some innovate fashion designs, using beads, golden threads and embossing with colored threads. She kept her prices moderate. After a couple of days of lull, at last, luck smiled on her. Customers came in droves and all the stock was exhausted within a week. She proved to herself that she could do something extraordinary. She hired more people to help her. She identified designers, particularly women, who, although skilled and talented, were not able to face the competition in the field, and put them to work.

She vacated the lodge and rented a small flat.

In the height of her success, she never forgot those who had helped and stood by her in difficult times; she suitably rewarded them. On Sundays and holidays, she opened an exclusive outlet for poor people who could not afford expensive clothing. She specially prepared low cost dresses for them.

She was constantly in touch with her family members. Occasionally, she sent them gifts. After two years, she returned to her parents, riding in triumph. The whole family was jubilant at her success. Valentine spent two weeks with them and returned to Paris.

If a person has reached a peak, from there she would see other peaks to be scaled. Now Valentine turned her attention to photography. She learned the tricks and techniques of photography and prepared a number of photo albums of human subjects as well as of natural scenery. She joined an amateur photography organization in Paris. She was one of the famous lady artists in that organization. She was regarded as one 'who could photograph something out of nothing', a hallmark of a creative photographer. A number of her photos were published in local magazines.

Now a deep passion for a different creative field had taken hold of her, namely, cinematography. In those days, movie making was gradually developing as a full-fledged art in Paris. The silent movies of Charlie Chaplin were being shown everywhere in Paris. Valentine watched the films with rapt attention and admiration. Some movie production companies were started in Paris and she enthusiastically joined some of them and imbibed the techniques of direction, editing and make-up. She also studied some current books on the subject.

In spite of her other activities, her garment emporium, however, was going on smoothly and successfully.

Meanwhile, her father Dr. de Kerven moved to Geneva with all his family. Valentine's sisters were married and settled well in life, the elder one working as a teacher and the younger one as a bank employee. Dr. de Kerven lived with his wife in the house he had bought for Valentine. Apart from that, he deposited money for all his daughters in a bank.

One day, Valentine received news that her father had died of a brain tumor. She attended the funeral for him in Geneva. After two years, her mother too had passed away.

Time rolled on and fifteen years had passed since Valentine came to Paris. She was now in her mid thirties. In 1931, she participated in a cross-country running race with some teenagers in Switzerland.

The sensational actress of France, Sarah Bernhardt, was the first woman to put on trousers. She did it in 1875. Later in 1931, Valentine wore a pair of trousers and walked on the streets of Paris. She gained reputation as the second woman who had put on trousers. The tabloid magazines of Paris had publicized this news widely.

The Modern Art Theater was quite popular in those years. It was a professional drama organization. Artists from different parts of the country participated in the events of the theater; they considered it a privilege to work in it. Devoted entirely to surrealistic drama, the theatre lasted only two seasons. A playwright and philosopher by name

Antonin Artaud,[95] the founder of the theater, was well known in Paris as a creative genius. He authored a number of plays.
One day, Valentine accidentally attended a play of Artaud along with a friend of hers. Later she attended many more of his plays and was impressed by the preciosity of the his total production and presentation. She decided to meet Artaud, intending to take part in the shows. She went to see him and introduced herself. Artaud was a man of few words; he was taciturn and introverted. He, however, developed a rapport with her and, in course of time, they became close associates.

Valentine imbibed the finer elements of drama from him as his student. Inspired by him, Valentine worked with another famous playwright and artist by name Dulin and together they presented an art piece written by Artaud. For this play Valentine provided the make-up. The play was put on several times in Paris and received critical acclaim.

Valentine was a compassionate woman. She encouraged talent wherever she saw it. She came to the rescue of many people financially. Some of her views were odd and opposed to tradition. One day, one of her friends asked about her views on religion. She answered, "Religion is purely a matter of personal taste."

Valentine's attitude towards men was also unique. She would not accept male supremacy. This aspect of her personality developed in her formative years. She, however, was never hostile to men. She respected their points of view.

Though Valentine had lived in Paris for many years and interacted with many people, no one came close enough to receive her ardent love. Her humanistic values led her to serving the sick and the wounded. Toward that end she underwent training as a nurse for six months.

Then, the curtain was raised for a new chapter in Valentine's life. In Paris, there was a hotel where all the local artists got together. Unexpectedly, in that hotel, Valentine became acquainted with Walmar Schwab. Schwab's ancestors were Russians who had settled in Switzerland. Schwab was an avid spectator of plays.

Overall, his demeanor was that of a tough man. Yet he was surprisingly timorous, submissive and reticent like a sensitive plant, a man of paradoxical mien.

Many men were surprised and jealous of the friendship and intimacy that had developed between Valentine and Schwab. How did her creative mind make such a glaring mistake? Where did her intellect go wrong? As far as Schwab was concerned, Valentine was the centerpiece of his attraction at every gathering. He had never met a woman who had so impressed him with such creative caliber as Valentine.

The acquaintance between them was gradually transformed into a solid bond. Valentine was perhaps one of the first Swiss women, if not the first, to break away from the stronghold of tradition and live with a man outside of wedlock; yet this was acceptable in Parisian society.

One day, Schwab broached the subject of marriage with Valentine. Valentine pondered for a while, as she was not surprised at his proposal, and said, 'Schwab, I have my own views on marriage. To me, marriage is a hug with bear claws. If she is bound by marriage, a woman loses her individuality and identity and is forced to compromise in many areas. Marriage is full of pitfalls. I have decided never to enter the portals of this entrapment, because I can't tolerate anyone bossing over me. I won't become a puppet to move at the directions of others. It hampers my free style living. But it does not mean that I will live the life of a tart. I have my own code of conduct dictated by my conscience. I am accountable only to that, not to man-made narrow rules and regulations to constrict a woman's movements. I will never live as a wife of somebody who can dictate to me or control my lifestyle,' she concluded in a sledge-hammer style.'

Schwab was taken aback and befuddled. Even in his anarchic way of life he had never encountered such a radical woman. But to live with her like a gigolo was not his cup of tea. Valentine put forward a proposal. She stressed that he should continue his education where he left off a long time ago and turn himself into a sophisticated person. When she asked him to continue his education, he answered, 'At this age, education appears a bit odd. I lost all my interest; it's not possible for me to go to college again,' recalling his past life with disgust. Valentine insisted, 'No, Schwab, take life as a challenge. Have some confidence and faith in your abilities. Age does not make any difference for education. You must have the will. You can and must educate yourself to change your lifestyle.' Valentine infused a great deal of confidence in him.

Schwab finally succumbed to her pressure and at the age of forty he began to educate himself again with determination and the moral support and encouragement of Valentine. He eventually received a doctorate in chemistry. Now he became Doctor Walmar Schwab.

Unfortunately, Dr. Schwab did not find a suitable job. Naturally, he was depressed and demoralized. He thought to himself, 'I wanted to prove a point, but as ill-luck would have it, I was condemned to lead a vagabond's life, depending on others, in spite of my doctoral degree. Where did things go wrong with me?'

At this point, Valentine thought of putting her knowledge of cinematography to use. She started a film company called "De Kerven Films" and put Schwab in charge of it. They together garnered the necessary information and produced a documentary on the research of her father Dr. Kerven. The film was screened all over the continent of Europe and was a success. Her name had become well-known.

After completion of the film, Valentine planned a few more documentaries. Schwab was kept busy with the collection of the necessary data for them.

All of a sudden, something distracted Valentine's attention from her creative pursuits. The common people of Spain were oppressed under the dictatorship of General Franco. Some of its people revolted against the government, demanding freedom and fundamental rights. Consequently, there was a civil war in 1936. It started in a corner of Spain, but rapidly spread day after day. Many intellectuals in France, led by the literary stalwart André Malraux, supported the struggle. The Russian leader Lenin also

pledged his support for the revolution. Many democrats, humanists, intelligentsia and scholars across Europe supported it as well.

Valentine had no taste for politics. But she read several pamphlets and booklets and was attracted by the theories of socialism. She was impressed by the rebellious spirit of the Spanish people. Along with Schwab she underwent military training in the use of firearms and in guerrilla warfare.

She prepared herself to go to Spain to fight for the Republican Army as a terrorist. She procured a fake passport for herself. At that time, the revolutionaries had an upper hand in the war. They took control of the key city of Guadalajara and were proceeding toward Madrid, the capital of Spain. A fierce fighting was on. But, General Franco changed his strategy and increased the security at the borders of the country. He ordered that every suspicious person should be shot down. A number of innocent people had died.

None of the terrorists who went from Paris to Spain returned. There was no information about them. The B.B.C. News reported that the revolutionaries were retreating. Valentine was ready to go in spite of the dangerous situation. But she was afraid that if she went she might not come back alive. Her sixth sense warned her. Consequently, she dropped the idea of joining the Republican Army.

Nonetheless, she played an important role in providing medical aid as a nurse to the wounded revolutionaries who had escaped from Spain. She treated hundreds of wounded people. After a few months, General Franco occupied the city of Guadalajara. He temporarily crushed the revolt. Thousands of people lost their lives in the civil war.

Soon after, Valentine decided to sell away her fashion design shop in Paris. She sold it to the workers who had been running the shop successfully. She demanded only a third of its market value. They pooled their resources and bought it. An important phase in Valentine's life came to an end.

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Ever since she was a child, Valentine had a keen interest in the Gypsies. She encountered them at several places over time. There were many misconceptions about them and people were prejudiced against them. Most of the European countries banished them, branding them as nomads, thieves and kidnappers of children.

'Who are the Gypsies?' 'Where did they come from?' 'Why do they dress in such strange costumes? 'What is their style of living?' – such questions had puzzled Valentine for many years. She decided to produce a documentary on the Gypsies.

Valentine, along with Schwab, visited the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and started gathering information. She studied their background.

She went to Holland along with Schwab to meet the Gypsies. There were many Gypsy groups there. She went to a large group and announced that she would make a documentary film on them to inform the world about them.

They were terrified at her proposal. They were unwilling to co-operate with her. She decided to live with them and toward that end pitched a tent with the help of Schwab. Later, she met the "Head" of the group and tried to convince him about her project. After receiving some money from her, the leader agreed and directed his people to co-operate. First, she started befriending the women and children, presenting them with small gifts, eatables and dresses for the children. She studied their daily routine and customs. She began to prepare a film script based on her findings. Slowly she learned their patois. During the nights she took part in their song and dance activities. To please them, one day she even wore their dress. She later presented them with many photographs of theirs.

Assisted by two people, she started filming regularly.

A very old woman, mother of the Head of the group, liked Valentine very much. One day, she came to her tent and offered to tell her future. Valentine did not have any faith in astrology or palmistry. However to please the old woman she agreed and showed her left palm to her. The old woman read her hand.

> You lead an adventurous life; you have already escaped death by a whisker. You will have another danger to your life, but by the will of God, you will be saved from that too. You are a generous and straightforward person. You will do as you like, but not according to others' bidding. Your married life is infertile; you won't have any children. You will not stay at any one place and will roam in different countries. During the third quarter of your life, suddenly a stranger appears in your life. That is divine will. Later, your life and destination will dramatically change. The rest of your life is bound with that person and you will live far away from your kith and kin. You will live a long life and your death will occur in an Eastern country where people are devotees of the Sun God.

While reading her palm, the facial expressions of the old woman changed and she spoke as if she was in a trance. After completing the prediction she reverted to her normal manner. Valentine appeared to listen to her with interest. She smiled at the old woman and gave her some money. The woman refused it, saying, 'No, no, not from you. You are different; you are an angel.'

The next day when Valentine returned from the nearby town after getting her film processed she came to know that the old woman had died in her sleep the previous night.

The documentary was completed. It was screened in Gomo British Theatre in London and was well received. It was considered a masterly work of art. It was purchased and dubbed into Spanish, Dutch, French, German and Italian languages and screened in different cities across the continent of Europe. It was well reviewed in the newspapers. Valentine was lauded as the first woman producer and director of films in Europe.

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Valentine was accustomed to live an adventurous life. And now she thought of a new adventure: to go around the Sahara Desert on a motorcycle. Till then no one undertook such a dangerous tour. Valentine began to gather the necessary information; she studied the maps and planned the route for her drive in the Sahara.

Valentine and Schwab decided on their route; they equipped themselves with the necessary articles and foodstuffs. They traveled 3,000 miles on 750 CC BMN motorcycle and established a record. At one point, they were stranded for three days without food and water, perched on a dead camel's body to avoid the scorching heat. The news of the adventurous tour of the couple was covered in different newspapers in Europe along with their photographs. Valentine was the first woman to go through the Sahara Desert on a motorcycle.

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Now it was a different phase in Valentine's life. In 1939, the Second World War broke out. Hitler began to devour one country after another ferociously, usurping the freedom, liberty and sovereignty of those countries.

A number of refugees sought shelter in France. Valentine joined the Red Cross in Paris as a nurse and rendered service to the wounded day and night. Meanwhile, Hitler attacked France; he began to conquer one French city after another and captured Paris. The city of Paris reverberated with the sounds of the marching German army. People were devastated and deserted their homes.

Under the precarious conditions prevailing in Paris, Valentine felt that it would not be safe for her to continue living there. She wanted to return to her fatherland with Schwab. On their journey they faced many hardships and escaped several dangers.

Switzerland was a neutral country and war did not affect it except economically. After returning to her fatherland, Valentine now had a better understanding of the value of freedom and liberty. The couple reached Geneva. She owned a house there. The tenants who were residing in the house till then had vacated it on Valentine's request.

Now Valentine was free in her native land to join the Red Cross as a nurse again. The refugees who had fled the war were falling ill. Valentine served them in the hospitals. Due to heavy a workload, her energies were sapped, but she continued to serve the patients at the risk of her own health.

Now, Valentine had to face a new problem. According to the Swiss law, it was a crime for couples to live together outside of marriage. The authorities would identify such couples and punish them severely. One day, Valentine and Schwab learned that the police laid a trap for them. They managed to escape. But the police were after them. They moved from one place to another avoiding the police. They realized that it was not possible for them to live that way for any length of time evading the long arm of the law. Still Valentine was adamant. She and Schwab left Switzerland to get married outside the country.

Valentine prepared a nuptial agreement and Schwab agreed to it. The agreement was as follows:

> We, Valentine De Kervin and Walmar Schwab, wish to live as man and wife as per the law of the land. But as per this agreement neither of us has any rights or control over the other. We will not violate each others' independence under any circumstance, directly or indirectly; we will not interfere with each other; and we don't have any restrictions on or powers over each other. It is obligatory on both of us to honor each others' individual opinions. We have agreed that we shall continue our independent lives in our marriage.
>
> The traditional principles and customs will not apply to us in any way. If either of us violates this agreement, the other person will have the right to live separately. Our incomes will also be kept separately. This is an agreement between both of us executed with respect for each another and with mutual consent, freely, voluntarily and without any force from anyone or any mental reservation.

Both of them signed the agreement. They lived together for twenty years without any other official marriage. Now a new life started.

On 14th June 1940, France was liberated from the iron grip of Hitler. Valentine and Schwab arrived in Paris since they both had their roots firmly placed in that city.

At that time the city of Paris was celebrating its liberty in a spirit of éclat. In every corner of the city, people were jubilant and cheerful. The city was in a festive mood. Valentine and Schwab participated in the celebrations with great enthusiasm. After that, they stayed in Paris for several years. Later, they migrated to Geneva and settled there permanently in her house.

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Valentine's irrepressible spirit of adventure always needed expression. Of late, she had decided to visit India, a land of ancient culture and civilization, since she had heard and read about it. She prepared a road map. In 1954, she and Schwab started their journey in a Volkswagen car from Switzerland via Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. They drove across India from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari in their car. It was an arduous but fruitful journey. They come across divergent cultures, people speaking different tongues, eating different foods, and wearing different clothing. They visited various monuments and temples both in the North and South of India and marveled at their architecture. Valentine observed the abject poverty in the country. When they passed the belt of the River Cauvery, they saw, in several small villages, half-clad dark-skinned men and women toiling gruesomely in the fields. Valentine liked their simplicity and their innocent faces. On the last leg of their journey, they went to Kanya Kumari where they had breathtaking views of sunset and sunrise and were awestruck. Valentine was fascinated by the South Indian cot, woven around with a native twine, and later they transported it with her Volkswagen car on a ship from Ceylon to Switzerland. They took numerous photographs wherever they went.

After she returned from India, she decided to put an end to her adventurous way of life by accepting a job in the Indian Consulate in Geneva as a translator and lead a peaceful and contented life in her own house, still living with Schwab.

But, so far, Schwab had been in the shade of Valentine without earning money on his own. He was depending for his living on Valentine's resources. For a few years he did some work related to De Kerven Films, but after that, he had no vocation at all. He was rather unhappy not being productive.

He thought to himself, 'Should my life end as a parasite without an identity or earnings of my own? Does my doctorate degree have no value? What is the use of my talent? What a misfortune!'

Schwab had had an unfulfilled dream in his heart. He had a great fondness for children. Unfortunately, to his disappointment, Valentine did not bear him any children.

Even at the age of sixty plus, Schwab tried seriously to find a suitable job, but to no avail. He thought of different business projects, but none of his efforts bore fruit. He developed a tendency to earn easy money by some means or other. Accidentally, he came into contact with some people who tried to prepare counterfeit pharmaceuticals secretly. They identified some popular pharmaceuticals and wanted Schwab to find their composition. Though Schwab knew it was a crime, he agreed, as he was tempted by the easy money. In a secret laboratory he tried to analyze the medicines to find their composition. He worked day and night but with no result. One day, Valentine came to know of this unlawful activity and rebuked him.

Schwab could not make a mark in any way; so he became a lazy laggard; and he also became querulous. He claimed some property rights, stating that Valentine spent more time in foreign countries than in her fatherland, that her two sisters exploited that opportunity and devoured most of the ancestral property, and that as a consequence she did not get here due share of it. But, as a matter of fact, Valentine's elder sister married a high society multi-millionaire.

Every day, Schwab dinned his views into Valentine's ears and she became somewhat convinced by his arguments. Schwab filed a lawsuit in a court on behalf of Valentine, as a result of which Valentine lost her amicable relationship with her sisters. And Schwab lost the case. Valentine felt too ashamed to meet her sisters and reconcile with them.

Schwab became involved in a love tangle with a girl of eighteen years, less than a third his age. It was not a temporary affair but a serious one. Upon knowing it, Valentine was shocked in disbelief. The person who was living with her for forty years had betrayed her trust for him. One day, she questioned him about the propriety of his affair. At first, he gave evasive answers. But another day, in an intoxicated state he blurted out in an aggressive tone, 'Yes, it's a fact; and I will do as I like and you don't have any right to question it. Remember, as per our marriage agreement, you don't have any right to come in the way of my free style of life. That's it.' He thus invoked their nuptial

agreement. The reference to it shocked Valentine. It was an unexpected affront to her person.

Her faith and confidence in him were shattered. She roared like a wounded tiger at him, 'You can live as you like and I have no objection to it. But this is my house. You cannot bring her into this house and I cannot tolerate your bossing over me. If you want to abide by our marriage agreement really, first you leave my house and live by yourself wherever you want.'

'Everybody knows you're my wife and if you claim any rights, I'll drag you to court and I will demand my share in the house lawfully,' he replied. Her wounded pride was further damaged as Schwab sued for divorce in a court of law.

Valentine began to feel that her life became meaningless. All her adventurous life turned into a mirage; her experiences in life seemed worthless. A gnawing feeling of futility enveloped her. The man whom she had loved ardently turned into a traitor.

She thought to herself, 'under these conditions, for whose sake should I live? What is the use of living any more when I'm not useful to anyone? Why should I live meaninglessly without any purpose?' Till then, Valentine's life was adventurous and full of challenges, but suddenly it appeared hollow. All her vitality and energy were sapped. She felt she was thrown into an abyss.

Then a weak and timid thought arose in her for the first time. There was no escape left, no other solution or alternative. The decision was final. Her violent mental agitation stopped. Suddenly she felt a sense of relief. As she was exhausted she soon slipped into sleep. In her sleep, she murmured and mumbled rather incoherently. She woke up abruptly at 5:30 in the morning, stretched herself and breathed heavily. Her mind was quiet and peaceful. She moved about in the room for a few moments. Feeling that there was no scope for rethinking, she closed the doors of her house and came out.

She started to walk on the street rather briskly, bracing the biting chill. The stars in the infinite sky appeared like sentries for the city of Geneva. In the early twilight rays, the streets were faintly visible. She walked toward the Geneva Lake. She looked at the lake and all of a sudden time appeared to have frozen.

A fast wind blew at Valentine's face. The lake looked frozen. There was no movement in the water. The body of Valentine shrank and shriveled due to the cold and her limbs became stiff. Yet, continuing to shiver, she slowly went forward and touched the water with her hand and withdrew it quickly in shock. She pondered, 'If I jump into the lake, will I die immediately or not? Must I sacrifice my life to these chilly waters?' For a moment she stood like a statue. Her mind dangled between life and death. To be or not to be?

The prospect of dying in this terrible cold was perhaps more horrifying to her than death itself. Valentine could not imagine herself dying by jumping into the lake. It was impossible. She could not muster the courage to go through with it. Her mind suddenly revolted., 'No, never. Death must be won over. I should not retreat from life. In the

gamble of life I was never defeated and I should never be in future.' The desire and will to live sprouted in her instantly once again.

Valentine heaved a big sigh of relief. Life won over death. Some unknown hand intervened at that crucial moment. Valentine withdrew herself from the lake and began to walk back rapidly with long strides toward her house. She remembered the words of the French Novelist Romaine Rolland who ended the biography of the German composer Beethoven with the words: '*Durch Leiden Freude.*'[96]

It was a rebirth for Valentine. The old Gypsy woman in Holland predicted a long time ago that Valentine would face another peril in her life. She did emerge from the icy hand of death.

Valentine jumped into her house like a deer which escaped from its hunter and opened the doors. She went straight into the kitchen and prepared a large mug hot tea. She changed her dress and felt buoyant and relaxed.

The doorbell rang. Valentine was surprised. Who could that be? She opened the door. Madeleine who worked as a receptionist in the Indian Consulate was standing before her. Valentine asked her in. Madeline opened the conversation, 'Valentine, I need a little help from you."

'What is it?

'My youngest son has developed fever and needs to be taken to the doctor. My husband is out of town. Do you mind taking care of my work at the reception counter in my place?' she requested.

'Don't worry, I will take your place; by the way, if you need any money, please feel free to ask,' offered Valentine.

'No, no, many thanks. There is no need for it,' thus saying, Madeleine took leave of her.

Precisely at 9.30, Valentine left her house and reached the Indian Consulate to take charge at the reception counter.

At this juncture, it should be mentioned that four seemingly independent occurred on the same day: one, Valentine attempted to commit suicide and changed her mind; two, Madeleine, her colleague, at the Consulate, came and requested her to take her place at the reception counter; three, U.G. Krishnamurti, vacated his hotel in Geneva, came to the Indian Vice-Consul and requested to be repatriated to India; and four, Valentine became interested in U.G. and opened her heart to him.

Now, was the meeting of Valentine and U.G. merely accidental or destined? Perhaps, as some said, 'accidental events analyzed microscopically are known as inevitable.'

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As U.G. continued as the guest of the Vice-Consul, he met Valentine regularly. As mentioned before, U.G. was stunned when Valentine credited 20,000 francs in a bank in his name. His stay as the Vice-Consul's guest was coming to an end.

Meanwhile, L.A. Bhave had sent him an airline ticket. It was also the last day to renew U.G.'s passport. U.G. returned the airline ticket to Bhave along with a letter expressing his thanks. His passport was renewed for five years. Having stayed for one month as his guest, U.G. profusely thanked the Vice-Consul and moved into a modest hotel.

For some reason, Valentine did not wish to continue as an employee of the Indian Consulate; so she resigned her job, to the astonishment of her colleagues. A new phase started in her life. Why did she take such a drastic step? In course of time, the news of Valentine's association with U.G. also became known in India.

From that fateful day that Valentine met U.G., the thought of her own life ceased to exist in her mind. She stopped to live for herself and began to live for U.G. Valentine and U.G. began their lives as fellow travelers in life. Later she enquired casually U.G. about the details of his life. He related to her particulars about his boyhood, his spiritual search, his world tours under the auspices of the Theosophical Society, his relationship with Jiddu Krishnamurti and his tours in America for many years as a speaker, and so on. He told her that he was married and was a father of four children.

Valentine listened to him attentively and thought within herself, 'I encountered a person who is extraordinary beyond any measure.' She wrote in her dairy: 'Where can such a rare person be found? It's my good fortune to meet a towering human being like U.G. Such persons are extremely rare.' Someone asked her, 'Who is he?' 'He is an inevitable and precious co-passenger who suddenly emerged in the train of my ongoing life.'

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51. The Journey Together

Valentine and U.G. contemplated moving out of Geneva to live together. U.G. said, 'The Saanen Valley would be a nice place to live.' Valentine agreed to his proposal and they both arrived in Gstaad in the Saanen Oberland area. In Saanen Valley they rented a chalet and started to live there.

U.G. visited that area for the first time in 1954 with his wife Kusuma and son Vasant on their way to America. Then an inner voice directed him to spend some time there. At that time, U.G. thought to himself, 'Someday, I should come here and spend my entire life.' After ten years his cherished dream was fulfilled.

Switzerland is considered a paradise on earth, God's own chosen land. Gstaad area in particular is wonderful for its natural splendor. Among the Alps Mountains there are a number of valleys and Oberland is one of them. It is also called Saanen Oberland. There are myriad varieties of tall trees all around. In every direction there are green lawns like silk carpets. All the valleys are covered with green in the summertime. There are seven mountains, all covered with snow in the wintertime. In the valleys there are small lakes and running streams.

Everyday in the morning and evening, U.G. went for walks and enjoyed the natural pulchritude.

One day, U.G. started to walk in the morning, watching the surrounding nature. Every minute the scenery was changing. On the other side in the Saanen valley, the sun could be seen faintly behind the fog. The towering treetops in the sky appeared like green clouds. The entire valley was bright green. After a few minutes the scene changed and on top of the mountain peaks, white clouds appeared, hanging like curtains. Fog began to move over the streams in the valley. There was a fine rain on one side, while on the other there was bright sunshine without a drop of rain. In the east, there were sun rays and in the west there was a rainbow. After a few moments the rain stopped and the colors in the rainbow faded out one after another.

U.G. walked along and noticed a variety of birds in rows in the sky, one row of birds following another. He walked further. On his left side there was a fast running river that flowed down the hills through the valley. There were large purple patches of heather. And there was a little wood of birch and fir scrambled upon the slope. High above the crags there was silver birch. These trees grew at great heights, above all other trees. Some of the mountain peaks were hidden by perpetual snow.

All of a sudden the weather changed; the air became full of swirling flakes of snow. The sky grew grey and laden with snow about to fall. Every mountain peak across the valley stood out like glistening marble and crystal, dazzling white in the golden sunlight beneath a cloudless sky of deep blue.

U.G. was completely immersed in that atmosphere and almost forgot from which direction he came there; it seemed as if there were no directions in that nature. Time

appeared to stand still and every moment seemed infinite. Here, there was ineffable bliss pervading, and man and nature had fused into one.

U.G. roamed on the infinite breast of Mother Nature in the Saanen area. He did not know how long he was there. He turned around towards the chalet along the path which appeared like a green carpet. Suddenly there was a shower, and a rainbow appeared in the sky. The fine rain drops appeared like pearls and after a few moments the shower had stopped. The sun slowly poured brightly across the valley, gilding the mountain peeks and painting the valley in a score of colors.

U.G. was completely soaked by the time he reached his chalet. Valentine was looking out for him anxiously. She asked, 'U.G., where you have been?'

'While sauntering in these beautiful surroundings here I forgot everything. Had I not felt hungry, perhaps I would have roamed further,' replied U.G. with a soft smile.

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For Valentine and U.G., days passed peacefully in Saanen. After a few months, an idea flashed in Valentine's mind while she was working in her kitchen. She thought about it for some time and when U.G. returned from his walk she mentioned it: 'U.G. how long can we live like this without any work? By nature, I am an active woman. I want us to do something which will keep us both occupied. So I have a plan.' She sat in the chair in front of U.G. There was a cold breeze of late hours of morning blowing through the open window before them.

'Well, please tell me, what would that be?' asked U.G. rather curiously. She looked at U.G. very interestingly and said, 'I have a strong desire to record your autobiography. I have been thinking about the idea for some time.' There was eagerness in her face.

U.G. laughed loudly, 'O, come on, Valentine, you must be joking. What's there in my life to record? Who do you want to record it for and for what purpose?' he questioned.

'U.G., for me, you are an extraordinary person, although you appear on the surface to be very ordinary. Interesting things had happened in your life. For whom and for what purpose, honestly, I have no answer for that, but I would like to record it. By recording it, I may not achieve anything, but it will give me a great satisfaction. And it would be a full-time occupation for me. Please don't reject my idea,' she said.

'Well, if you derive some satisfaction from it, I won't deprive you of it. As you please,' said U.G.

One day, making everything ready, Valentine started to record the autobiography of U.G. He started to narrate the details of his life chronologically. Valentine took them down in shorthand. Later she typed and filed them away.

Days, weeks and months passed with this avocation. Everyday, U.G. would go for walks mornings and evenings and after the walks, he would narrate his story, sometimes late into the night.

When U.G. began to give an account of his family's relationship with the Theosophical Society and of his tours as a speaker, Valentine asked, 'U.G., what is the Theosophical Society? What are its history and objectives? Perhaps it would be better to write about it after knowing its details.'

'To know about it thoroughly, it's necessary for us to go to London, Rome or Madrid and gather the required information from the libraries of the branches of the Society in one of those cities,' said U.G.

Later, they both went to London and lodged in a hotel. Valentine began to gather the information she needed by studying the literature on Theosophy. She was puzzled by a huge volume called *The Secret Doctine* by H. P. Blavatsky, whose real authors, according to Countess Wachtmeister, were the Adept Brothers. But she could not understand anything. It is beyond her grasp.

Valentine and U.G. toured the continent of Europe for further details. She prepared voluminous notes on Theosophy to incorporate in U.G.'s autobiography. In course of time, the avocation turned into a passion for Valentine. During the summers, however, they stayed in Saanen.

The recording of the autobiography had a redeeming effect on Valentine. She felt that she had matured and mellowed more.

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The lawsuit of Schwab claiming a right over Valentine's house was dismissed in the court. However, his divorce petition remained pending. When the lawyer informed Valentine about the court decision, U.G. and she came to Geneva.

When U.G. learned of Valentine's wish to reestablish contact with her sisters, he persuaded her to see them. She agreed to visit her elder sister Adrian Pedote. By coincidence, on that day, her younger sister Rose Jocket was also present.

When Valentine suddenly appeared at their door with a stranger, they couldn't believe their eyes. Valentine introduced U.G. to her sisters saying 'I've a large head but no brains. Because of his persuasion, I've come here. Till now, I've been feeling ashamed of showing my face to either of you;' then she continued enthusiastically, 'and here's an extraordinary person whom I have met unexpectedly. After meeting him my life has changed completely.'

U.G. charmed them with his radiant face, glistening eyes and spotless white dress; he was the cherished guest who brought the sisters together after many years. Adrian Pedote gave a grand dinner in his and her sister's honor.

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Valentine looked ahead into their future life together and decided to sell off her house. It was put up for sale in the local newspapers and soon a person who liked the old French architecture of her house purchased it for the cost she had asked for it. Thus Valentine severed her connection with Geneva.

She had other money, received from her father, in the bank in the form of gold bars. Now she converted all her wealth, including the sale proceeds of the house and the gold bars, into liquid cash.

She drew up a plan to take care of their future economic needs. One day, she went to the bank and opened an account in the name of "U.G. Krishnamurti Travel Fund". She deposited all her money in that account. She decided that the amount should be kept intact as principal and only the interest given by the bank should be spent for their needs. Explaining her decision to U.G. she said:

'U.G.., you are the sole heir to that amount after me. You should not be in want of anything. I sincerely wish that your life should continue naturally and flow smoothly'. Who knows, what prompted her to invest her entire wealth in U.G.'s safety and security?

She did not like to have anything, even a twig, left for herself. She laid the royal road for U.G.'s future happy life and decided to be his support till the very end of her life.

It is indeed a mystery how, having hailed from different backgrounds, they became associated with each other.

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Man is rather deeply conditioned by his food habits. To change one's inveterate food habits suddenly for any reason is not easy task. Valentine had to face a ticklish problem. U.G. was raised a vegetarian and she a non-vegetarian. So far, she had been preparing two separate meals for them, which was a time-consuming and tedious process. Now she sacrificed her taste buds and cooked only vegetarian food, as she felt that cooking a different meal for each of them was too complicated.

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Every year, Krishnaji stayed in the Gstaad area for a few days and gave talks. A number of his followers attended the meetings regularly. When U.G. went on his walks, some of Krishnaji's admirers noticed him. As he was an Indian, some of them could not contain their curiosity and introduced themselves to him. Gradually, these acquaintances became friends. Sometimes, they too accompanied him on his walks. Once they learned that U.G. had a serious spiritual background, they became even more interested in him. Robert Carr, Paul Arms, Kim, Connie and others got to know U.G. Robert Carr was athirst for spiritual knowledge and was a "truth seeker". He was committed to Krishnaji. He came to see U.G. on and off.

Krishnaji is considered one of the great spiritual teachers of our times. People who attended his talks got entangled in his ideas and vocabulary. They wouldn't always understand the real meaning behind his abstractions. However, these people would get bamboozled by his talks; and when they met U.G. they would repeat Krishnaji's vocabulary and even imitate his manner of speaking. They didn't know that U.G.'s had had deep connections with Krishnaji in the past. As usual, U.G. would criticize Krishnaji ruthlessly. They never heard or met anyone who dared to question Krishnaji's line of thinking. Where did he get his authority? Who was this U.G.?

In course of time, they were very much fascinated by his logical arguments and impressed by his multi-faceted knowledge in the spiritual area as well. His criticisms were always made in a friendly and cordial manner. They felt that U.G.'s company was natural and pleasant, without any trappings of superiority.

As it became known in Saanen and Gstaad by now that a strange person, another Krishnamurti, was now living in town, people came to see him in droves. The chalet where U.G. lived was filled with such visitors and it created a great pandemonium. The landlord was worried that the house might not be able to hold such a big crowd.

Sometimes, while arguing vehemently and ferociously, U.G. would suddenly break out into jokes, thus releasing the tension. To their astonishment, U.G., at the same time, seemed to appreciate Krishnaji. He used to comment, 'His personality is unique; he is a man of rare qualities. The path suggested by him is priceless. His language is universal.' His audience was perplexed by the contradictory opinions he would express about Krishnaji.

Some people, being influenced by U.G.'s teachings, stopped attending Krishnaji's lectures. They preferred the cheerful and pleasant company of U.G. to the strict and austere atmosphere around Krishnaji. Besides discussing spiritual topics, U.G. also spoke about day-to-day problems of common interest very candidly.

In the presence of Krishnaji certain discipline was expected. While he spoke no one was allowed to talk or raise any questions. Strict punctuality and perfect silence were observed. Krishnaji's talks were of a serious nature. The person himself was remote, sedulous, yet sequestered, and cool, calm, yet calculating. People regarded him with awe.

In contrast, U.G.'s residence was like a public meeting place, with doors open to anyone at any time. Anyone could talk to him and move with him freely. They could even eat, drink or sing and dance before him as they pleased. Without batting an eyelid, even silly questions could be posed to him and one could freely criticize him without fear. Consequently, a group of enthusiastic youth gathered around U.G.

U.G. used to give his talks basing himself on his past experiences:

> The doors of future should always be kept open. Life is a journey of exploration to reach different destinations. Potentiality exists within everyone, to whatever extent; for this you need not depend on or follow anybody's sermons; you have

to just set your goals and tap your own resources to reap the rewards. Anyone can ascend to the peak in his own way in his chosen field.

Don't get entangled in the trap of utopian concepts of religion, philosophy or spiritual understanding. They are all false; by adopting them in your life, you are falsifying yourself. Beware of all those traps, of which there are many.

Everything should be questioned, dissected and tested. Anything which cannot stand to logic or reason, however grand or noble it may be, should not be accepted unless it is proven beyond doubt. You have to lay your path with your own hands. Don't expect that someone else will come to your rescue; that is self-deception. You must stand alone and steady. You may tumble again and again; but never mind, you will pull yourself up. Don't hanker after crutches. You require no props except dogged determination, passion and sincerity. You are the master of your own destiny. There are influences, counter-influences, temptations, empty promises and blind beliefs engulfing you. All such things must be rooted out with discretion, zeal and natural commonsense.

It is not enough to look at life from a particular angle; it ought to be looked at from multiple angles, as life is like a prism. There are umpteen spiritual people who deceive you by saying that they have a soothing balm for your pains. Their numbers are growing day by day on spiritual mounds like mushrooms. Spirituality is a flourishing million-dollar business. Believe me; they don't possess anything which could be useful to you. They just exploit your gullibility and credulity. Beware of them.

The propelling power is within you. It *is* you. There is no power beyond man. For everything man is the central point and centrifugal force. Revolt against all spiritual authority and domination. You must question everything, doubt everything.

Uprooting the established bifurcation of the world into "spiritual" and "mundane", U.G. said, 'There is no other reality. This is the only reality. There is no "higher way of life" and "lower way of life." Only life exists. That's all.'

Among U.G.'s audience there were some youths unsure of themselves. He pointed out to them: 'This is a rat-race world. You have to strive with every nerve to be competitive. Accept the challenge. Any self-doubt is a deadly poison, a curse. It would kill the real spirit inherent in man. You must believe in yourself to achieve anything. As Bernard Shaw rightly said, "Try to get what you like or else you will grow to like what you get."'

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One evening, U.G. went out for a walk as was his wont. When he was returning home there was a sudden heavy rain on the way. U.G. got drenched completely. He heard a car coming from behind him; it stopped by his side. Krishnaji was driving the car. He rolled down the car window and said, "Hop in," offering him a ride.

'Do you have any insurance on your car? Thank you, Krishnaji. I prefer to walk,' replied U.G.

'All right, suit yourself,' said Krishnaji and drove off.

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Time rolled on. Days, weeks and months passed. It was spring.

Valentine was continuing with her recording of U.G. autobiography. It was in its final stages. She was surprised at the manner in which he was narrating his biography. He was nonchalant in his narration of past events, as if they were not related to him, as if it was a biography of someone else. Valentine liked his frank and matter-of-fact style. His life was spread out like an open book.

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One day, after a good night's sleep, U.G. woke up in the morning, suffering from a severe headache. Gradually the pain surged in his temples. Unable to withstand it, he went to the local store for some aspirin tablets. When he took the aspirin with some hot coffee, he had a little relief, but within a short time the headache resumed. This time he had taken two tablets but the ache did not subside. Somehow he endured the pain. He went for his routine walk despite the pain. He had a disturbed sleep that night.

The next morning too, he had severe pain; he swallowed aspirin tablets again with coffee. The headache did not abate. It occurred every day and became rather a nuisance. He was normally opposed to taking any kind of medication, as he believed that the body has its own healing mechanisms. It takes care of itself. Pain, in his view, is some sort of healing process. But persistent headaches created problems.

Whatever it might have been, Valentine was annoyed with the whole thing. The daily expenditure for aspirin tablets and coffee rose sky-high. One day, she questioned him: 'U.G., every day you are consuming aspirin like mints along with umpteen cups of coffee. Do you know how much it cost? It amounted to four hundred francs for the last month. What's all this about?'

U.G. smiled and kept quiet. How to explain to her the pain he had been suffering everyday? Whenever he had the headache, he would tolerate it as much as he could. He remembered his experiment with pain at Chicago. At that time, to find out what would happen if he didn't do anything about it, he bore it and when he was unable to withstand it any longer, he became unconscious.

He observed the pain closely and attentively when it was present, without taking any aspirin or coffee. To his surprise the pain subsided by itself after a while. Thereafter, only when it became unbearable, he would take a minimal dose of aspirin. And one day, it completely dissociated itself from him as a snake sloughs off its old skin. But the entire episode of his headaches remained a mystery.

Soon after U.G. recovered from the onslaught of his headaches, he had to face another strange problem. The hairs on his entire body began to horripilate; they bristled, stood erect and stiff, as if he was walking against cold wind. He also experienced heat all over his body. It originated from within his body. The body felt like a heated pot. He also experienced prickly sensations on his hands, legs and back, as if insects were crawling over them. The skin was dry and cracked and felt as if it was darned. Thin layers of the skin seemed to peel off like layers from a thick piece of mica. Whenever he rubbed or scratched his body, fine sparks emanated from the pores of the skin. The sparks appeared like concentrated sun rays reflected from inside a block of ice. The body of U.G. was discharging sparks of the color of yellow phosphorus. While sitting alone, if he rubbed his body, sparks issued forth from it as from a flint stone. When the lights in the room were turned off and his body was rubbed, sparks appeared like the lights of fireflies. Suspecting that the nylon clothing he was wearing might have caused them, he switched to cotton clothing. But the sparks persisted.

U.G. was utterly puzzled by these strange phenomena. His body seemed to have undergone a mysterious mutation.

When he rolled on the bed from one side to other, bright light flashed. The light rays from his body were showing through even his woolen clothing. On some nights, when he lay on his bed the light rays would fall on the walls. But when he got up from the bed, the light also changed its direction like a beam of light from a torch.

One day, Valentine was attending to some chores in the next room. She observed the light flashes from U.G.'s room and came running, 'U.G., what were those lights? They appeared like car headlights. But there are no cars anywhere here. What's happening?' she enquired.

U.G. kept silent for a moment and said, 'The light is coming from my body. I don't know why'

'What? From your body? Lights are coming from you? What a wonder! Are you all right?' she said in astonishment.

But when she herself noticed the light from his body cast on the wall, she was stunned and could not believe her own eyes. She was agape; she rubbed her eyes and looked again at the strange phenomenon before her very eyes. Wow!

At nights, U.G. began to saunter toward the corner of the room watching the light shed on the walls. In course of time, it had become a pastime for him. Being rational down to the foot, he observed everything with a scientific and logical attitude.

U.G. later described his current state of being as "incubation period".

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As usual, U.G. went for his walks and had discussions with his friends, inviting some of them for lunch or dinner. He also visited them at their places.

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It was a Sunday. After the usual prayers in the church, people were returning home. U.G. was then walking along the road near the church. Suddenly, someone recognized him from a distance. He said to his friend walking with him, 'Look there, your friend is returning home from his walk.'

Henry François, the organ player of the church turned his eyes in U.G.'s direction and said, 'Yes, he is a man of many facets, like a gem. Do you want to meet him?' The other man shook his head negatively and asked Henry, 'Why are you meeting this Indian so often?'

'As I said, he is many things. He is like a ball of moving fire. Something is odd about him. I don't care for his company; at the same time, I can't keep myself away from him. Isn't that strange? That's what's special about him,' explained Henry to his friend.

Henry attended Krishnaji's talks and read all his books. He formed the highest regard and respect for him. He considered Krishnaji to be one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century; "a living Buddha", he called him.

One day, Henry happened to meet U.G. on his way. In that causal encounter, Henry was drawn to U.G. They met frequently and talked. One day, Henry broached the topic of Krishnaji's philosophical thought and got into trouble. He felt as if he disturbed a beehive. As if a devil had possessed him, U.G. shattered Krishnaji's line of thought with his logical acumen. Henry totally surrendered and was crestfallen. Since then he nurtured animosity toward U.G. and vowed never to see him again. But strangely, he was unable to stay away from him. He would unconsciously walk toward U.G.'s chalet. This happened several times. U.G.'s was irresistible.

Of the many people who regularly attended Krishnaji's talks every year, another person who unexpectedly met U.G. and introduced himself to him was Douglas Rosestone. He gradually became a close associate of U.G. Their meeting seemed as if it was destined to happen.

Douglas Rosestone was about thirty-five-years-old. He was tall and thin and had a chiseled frame of face, a broad forehead, a long elevated nose, elongated ears and sharp eyes. His hair was parted sideways naturally. He appeared to be serious but was generally cheerful and gentle. He was liberal in offering criticism but sparse in his flattery. He unceasingly sought some spiritual understanding of his own. He was highly devoted to his friends and never lost touch with them.

In 1966, Douglas came to Saanen to attend Krishnaji's talks. He pitched a tent on the bank of the river and stayed in it with his friends, Robert Carr, Paul Arms and Connie. One day, one of his friends informed Douglas about U.G.: 'He is an Indian. Some people call him "the other Krishnamurti". He is like a volcano. He appears like a spiritual behemoth. When any philosophical point is raised before him, he spews out fire like lava. And it's difficult to withstand that scorching heat. But he is an interesting personality. If you have guts, go and meet him,' he said.

'Where does he live?'

'He lives in a three-hundred-year-old chalet called Pfyffenegg with an old woman. By the way, do you know what "Pfyffenegg" means? It mean whirlwind. Indeed a fitting word to describe him. He fumes at everything. His guts are mind-boggling. Yet he is a very simple man, down to the earth,' his friend said in an emphatic note.

Douglas decided to meet U.G. The following day, he went to Chalet Pfyffenegg and saw him there.

At that time, U.G. was arguing ferociously with Henry François. Douglas approached them and sat with them silently. The discussion was about "choiceless awareness". All the philosophical lingo of Krishnaji was being crushed into smithereens ruthlessly. Douglas squirmed and felt annoyed. He could not believe that Krishnaji could be so mercilessly criticized, especially by another Indian. Douglas had regarded Krishnaji as "the great emperor of the spiritual kingdom who has been trying to uplift humanity." What biting irony!

He did not wish to interfere with their conversation, as it would not be polite or proper. He silently followed their heated arguments. But the feeling of uneasiness and irritation had doubled. Douglas fixed his eyes on U.G.'s demeanor. There was something uncommon and adorable about him. U.G.'s tone of expression and gesticulations seemed quite natural. However, every word that U.G. had uttered about Krishnaji offended him and his mind was gripped by the idea of getting away from U.G.'s tirade. But without his knowing, his desire to leave had fizzled out and he stayed on. He felt something other than his judging mind was fascinated by U.G.

After a few moments, just as the dew drops disappear when the sun's rays touch them, the Douglas's hostility towards U.G. had evaporated. He began to feel an affinity for U.G.

The discussion drew to a close. Henry exited from the battlefield like a wounded soldier. At that moment, U.G. gazed at Douglas charmingly. Douglas introduced himself. U.G. shook hands with him and smiled meaningfully and mysteriously. Douglas was enchanted and captivated by U.G.'s seraphic smile. The power of that smile touched his whole being. He was hooked to U.G. Day by day, their friendship grew stronger.

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One day, when Douglas was present, U.G. paid the highest encomium to Krishnaji for about half-an hour. 'He is a unique personality; very rarely we can come across a person comparable to him. I may not agree with his philosophical thought, but I very much appreciated his zeal and zest.'

On hearing his high-flown words, Douglas was puzzled and befuddled. Why this ambivalent attitude? Douglas could not assess the complex personality of U.G. For that

matter no one could gauge him. As U.G.'s cousin, Narasimha Rao, aptly put it, 'In his complex nature there are many conflicting traits and extremes others found bewildering and exasperatingly difficult to cope with. He was molded like that.'

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U.G. was always a light sleeper. He rose before sunrise, never missed his early morning walks in those idyllic surroundings. He spent long, solitary hours in the wonderful vegetation of Saanen; he enjoyed his communion with nature.

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Douglas invited U.G. and Valentine to his tent occasionally for a vegetarian lunch, as he derived great satisfaction in being a host. U.G. would also invite Douglas and his friends to his Chalet Pfyffenegg for an occasional meal which he would himself prepare.

One day, Douglas and his friends sat leisurely at his tent. Unexpectedly, U.G. started praising Krishnaji to the utmost heights. 'He has touched the glorious summits of spirituality. In the string of false pearls, he is the only pure and genuine one.' Once again, Douglas was taken aback. He could not grasp U.G.'s mental makeup. He asked, 'U.G., why this dichotomy in you? I am unable to fathom. At one moment you praise Krishnaji to the skies and the next moment you decry him, using him as a whipping boy. Why do you have this paradoxical attitude?'

U.G., buried in profound thought, remained motionless for a few moments with his arms folded, and his hair thrown back by a movement of the head; he threw a sidelong glance at Douglas and clarified his stand: 'It is my basic credo to give due respect to people who deserve it without any ulterior motive. At the same time, I have no hesitation in contradicting anyone, no matter who he is, according to my level of understanding. So my apperception of Krishnaji is quite different from that of others. It's as simple as that.'

Douglas was not satisfied with or convinced by his reply, because he heard that both Krishnaji and U.G. had a Theosophical background and that there was a strong bond between them. For about seven years U.G. and Krishnaji had close contacts directly or indirectly.

Krishnaji, who was considered to be a chosen vehicle of truth, was destined to play a pivotal role by spreading his pure and pristine teachings. How come a fellow-Indian in such close proximity cut him to size deliberately? It was beyond the comprehension of Douglas.

Yet Douglas was comparing U.G. with Krishnaji. Krishnaji carried on his shoulders the whole angst of humanity. U.G., on the contrary, appeared indifferent. In his view, it is useless to uplift humanity or to try to instill order in a disorderly world. He would say let it go its own way. The concept of saving the world irritated him. Human nature cannot be altered, as it is fixed like the stars and fossilized in the psyche. Human mind

is irreversibly conditioned. It has no chance to be any other way. Thus, the two men went in diametrically opposite directions.

Later, looking at Douglas, U.G. said, 'You seem to like yoga. Why don't you go to India and learn it?' Douglas was surprised at this suggestion. 'What a strange coincidence! Just today Krishnaji said the same thing. I am preparing to go to India soon. I have gathered all the information I need.'

Douglas left for India to learn yoga. Time rolled on.

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On that day, U.G. started for his walk in the morning and the sky was covered with white spongy clouds; they were gently moving on and behind them a chain of gray clouds followed. The sun stood high in the sky and pine tops shone against the summer sky. The morning air was cool and fresh. It was full of the balmy scent of pine needles and peaty soil. The mossy pathway was damp and soft, comforting U.G.'s feet. The wet tree branches touched U.G. and gave way to him. Fog was moving along the streams of the Valley. In the fog magpies flew making musical sounds.

U.G. walked back on a different route, as he was familiar with the entire Saanen area. He walked amidst hickories and maples that bordered the green path. The trees had ample foliage and their branches stretched downwards like wings. On the banks of the river the bushes blossomed in bunches. Some insects were crawling on the fallen colorful flower petals on the ground.

When U.G. retuned to his chalet he noticed Douglas waiting there. U.G. smiled and enquired, 'That means you have returned after finishing your yoga course in India.'

'Yes, indeed. I have studied with Mr. Desikachari and I have come back with him. It was a wonderful and rewarding trip. I thoroughly enjoyed it,' he reported.

'What? You went to learn yoga and returned along with your Guru?'

'That is right.'

'He must have come to see Krishnaji.'

Douglas narrated the details of his trip to Madras. U.G. was very pleased about his endeavor to learn yoga.

One day, Douglas came to Chalet Pfyffenegg with Desikachari along with Alain Naudé, the secretary of Krishnaji and introduced them to U.G. U.G. welcomed them cordially. Desikachari learned about U.G. and his cooking skills through Douglas. He felt very happy to be acquainted with a south Indian; his taste buds were already craving for his own type of food. Desikachari said, 'May I trouble you for some Indian food,' said Desikachari laughing. 'You are most welcome, sir! Whenever you like, please come here, my doors are always open,' said U.G. pleasingly. In the very first meeting,

Desikachari liked U.G. He could see some glow on his face. 'He is an extraordinary man. There is a great pull in him,' he thought to himself.

Three times a week Desikachari visited U.G. and enjoyed the vegetarian food prepared by him in the South Indian style.

One Sunday, Desikachari came to U.G. along with Alain Naudé on some business. After ten minutes, Desikachari exclaimed, 'U.G., we have come with a request; we need a favor from you.'

'Yes, By all means; what can I do for you?' said U.G. Meanwhile Douglas also came in and greeted them all with folded hands. Desikachari went on, 'U.G., you have studied in Madras University; you must have a close contact with Professor Mahadevan, right? We have a request to make.'

'Yes, I know him very well, go on.'

'We are wondering if you could write a letter to Professor Mahadevan to arrange for Krishnaji's talks for the benefit of the students of Madras University. It's essential for the present youth to know about Krishnaji teachings. The students may benefit from them. What do you think?'

Douglas watched U.G.'s face carefully for his reaction. U.G. kept silent.

How many people have molded their lives under the influence of the philosophical talk of Krishnaji over a period of so many years? How many actually understood his philosophy? When these questions were posed to Krishnaji, he is reported to have replied: 'It's not my responsibility. I am only instrumental. They have to decide for themselves the directions of their journey.'

Breaking the silence, Naudé added, 'We will be very grateful if you could write a letter.'

U.G. was submerged in deep thought. After a few moments he replied rather unwillingly, 'Well, since you are pressing me, I will write to him and we shall wait for his response. However, I must warn you that Professor Mahadevan is a traditionalist to the hilt.'

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Valentine and U.G. were more inclined to roam from place to place like migratory birds than to stick to one place. They decided to visit Paris. They stayed in their old familiar hotel and a number of local friends came to see them. U.G. learned that Krishnaji was also in Paris then.

On 11th April 1967, Krishnaji came to Paris from Rome. He stayed in Boulogne Billan Court near Rue de Verden. He was giving talks in Salle de Chimie.

One of U.G.'s friends suggested, 'Your old friend is giving talks here. Why don't you go and listen to him?' U.G. became thoughtful. His friend looked at Valentine and asked, 'What would you say?'

Valentine did not have any taste for or interest in Krishnaji's talks. All of a sudden U.G. made up his mind to go for the talks. 'Well, today I feel like listening to the old man again after several years,' so saying, he and Valentine went to attend Krishnaji's talk.

On arriving at the place, they found that they had to pay an entry fee of two francs per head. U.G. got wild, 'No, let's not pay. It's a sheer waste to pay to attend the spiritual farce of his talk.'

Valentine was surprised to notice such anger on U.G.'s face. After a few minutes, U.G. said, 'Valentine, instead of attending the talk paying money, let's do some something foolish. Let's go to the striptease joint in Casino de Paris.'

Valentine was shocked at his suggestion. She looked at him aghast. She could not believe that U.G. would want to go there. She was in a quandary. 'Are you serious?'

'Yes, I am,' U.G. replied firmly, 'I need some entertainment.' Valentine thought it was better to go along with him to help him calm down, as he looked so upset. They went to Casino de Paris. It was a famous and expensive burlesque club in Paris. The entry fee for the show was twenty francs. So what? In place of that "talkative show" of Krishnaji, U.G. decided to attend the titillating show, spending twenty francs.

They purchased the tickets and went in. The sprawling hall was full of audience. A bevy of beauties appeared on the stage. The dancers were moving like whirling dolls exhibiting their naked beauty. The audience was getting excited watching them. Some were babbling boisterously on seeing the naked breasts of the dancers.

U.G. was quietly watching the show. Valentine looked at the menu card and ordered some refreshments. The atmosphere was commotional and tumultuous. The musical instruments were contributing their part to the noise and the naked damsels were dancing to the accompaniment of the music.

Suddenly the lights in the hall were turned off and loud tantalizing music was heard. A special dancer came rushing onto the stage in the darkness and began to gyrate a mad breathtaking feat spinning like a top. A spotlight was focused on her on the stage. The dancer paraded her nudity with charming intrepidity. She started jiggling her huge breasts, upwards and downwards, rightwards and leftwards and twirling her body in clockwise and anti-clockwise directions. She roused excitement in the audience.

U.G. gazed at the dancer innocently and dispassionately, devoid of any amorous feelings, as a baby watches his mother's breasts.

In the Casino de Paris, U.G.'s consciousness crossed its boundaries. Suddenly he experienced that *he* was dancing in the place of the dancer, moving his breasts. He felt

that *he* was the dancer, not a mere spectator of the dance. At that moment there was no observer. There was one movement. There was no division between him and the dancer. That state continued in him for sometime. Then U.G. became normal again. It took him a while to gauge this experience. He did not, however, mention it to Valentine.

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Valentine and U.G. came to Geneva from Paris. She wanted to see her ailing sister, but U.G. did not feel like accompanying her, as he would normally. His entire body craved to rest. So he rented a room in a five star hotel. After Valentine left the hotel he immediately fell flat on the bed and slept like a log, covering himself with a blanket.

During the sleep U.G. had a terrifying and ghastly dream. In the dream a huge deadly snake bit him and within seconds he had died. Somebody carried his body in the traditional manner to the cremation ground on a stretcher made of bamboo sticks. His body was being burnt on the pyre. From the heat of those flames in the dream U.G. suddenly woke up. On waking up he found that it was actually the excessive heat from the electrical blanket covering him that woke him up. That was the last dream U.G. had ever had. He never dreamed again.

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From Geneva U.G. and Valentine returned to Chalet Pfyffenegg in Saanen and resumed their daily routine. U.G. remembered his promise to Desikachari. He typed a letter to Professor Mahadevan at the University of Madras. On the basis of the information about the tour schedule of Krishnaji provided by Desikachari, U.G. wrote Professor Mahadevan the following letter. As usual, he kept two copies of the letter with him, a habit he had had since his childhood.

Chalet Pfyffenegg,
Saanen BB, Switzerland,
24th June 1967.

My Dear Dr. Mahadevan:

How much of a surprise would it be to hear from an old student of yours? My, it is almost quarter of a century. Yet, the impact and memory of your lectures on "The Philosophy of Advaita Vedanta" have remained with me in all their freshness.

Although my whole way of life has since then been distracted and sidetracked, my basic preoccupation has not changed. Being forced to put aside my study of academic philosophy — I have always been a bit inclined to be unworthy of our traditional thinking or what is called "metaphysical galimatias"– I have in a way come back to philosophy, but differently, by feeling it in myself as also in those I met and talked to, by questioning the fixed opinions and by tearing up the ideas in my search for Truth. My philosophy, if I may use that word for want of a more appropriate word, is born of "spiritual experience" rather than from logically ascertained premises. Every one has to search for truth in his own way. And I have always wanted to explore it myself. Have I

found what I sought – MYSELF? I do not know. I am not questing anything. I do not know who said this but it is very true that the second half of one's life should surely be one's own after more or less one has given away the first half in imitation.

I have been here in Switzerland for over four years, I have never been able to settle down for any length of time in any place to, what they call, take roots. May be I have a taste for some kind of a "gypsy way of life". Now after years of trotting around the globe – I have lived and lectured practically everywhere in the world, including a few iron-curtain countries, mostly in the United States of America – I have settled down in this little village (Saanen), high up in the mountains, Berner Oberland, to what I hope the beginning of a new phase of life. I am going to spend the rest of my life teaching a few boys, amidst these mountains and valleys, and create an atmosphere to keep alive the tendency of their minds to be inquiring, to investigate, to experiment and to discover things for themselves. Who knows, this feeble and vitally unorthodox beginning of an experiment might in due course become wider and stronger.

Now, the chief object of my writing this letter is to find out if you could, if so you would, invite Mr. Jiddu Krishnamurti to give a talk at the University of Madras. Maybe more, I do not belong to any organization and am no devotee of any religion or any particular religious teacher. I do not have any connection with Krishnamurti Writing Incorporation or any gathering committees that arrange his talks here in Europe, or there in India, or elsewhere. Whenever I have an opportunity – he has been coming to Europe almost every year — I attend his talks and discussion meetings. He has talked for forty years. Krishnamurti is unchanged, except he looks a little older. Isn't it extraordinary that the augury of what had once been deemed only a fancy of theosophist–occultists, although by its own definition that legend is now false, has turned out to be an outstanding prophecy? The spontaneity and freshness that radiate from every word comes like a cool mountain breeze to those who are sick to death of smelly little orthodoxies and pat philosophical and political theories. His approach to human problems without raising a religious quest is admittedly attractive to the modern mind. Few today, I think, would question his right to be considered a great religious teacher, though of a pattern that may easily mislead if one takes the phrase in its full sense but it is very difficult to say anything about him except that he is a religious teacher. Since his "teaching" is not a propagating doctrine but enunciation of pure and full life, something unique, it is difficult to find in his talks a gospel to proclaim and a cause to champion. That may, perhaps, be the reason why the direct impulse of his insight in the field of human experience has not been felt even after forty years of his talking to audiences everywhere in the world. More recently, he has spoken before many enthusiastic university audiences. Last year, he gave a few talks at Harvard University. And this year, he has spoken at the Universities of Rome and Amsterdam. When he goes to England next Fall, he will probably speak to audiences at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. I do not know for sure.

Logically some Departmental Head, if at all he is interested, should extend an invitation to speak at the University of Madras. Since Mr. Krishnamurti has spoken at Harvard, Sorbonne, Rome and Amsterdam Universities, it occurred to me that I should write to you, as a former student of yours at the University of Madras, to extend an invitation to him to give a talk or two during his visit to Madras. He will be in Madras

next January (1968), to be precise from 6th January to 3rd February, and will give six talks to the same old people who go to his talks year after year. It is not that I am interested in spreading his word but that I have often felt, and still feel, that he should be asked, if he has time, to address young people in the universities too. It is for that reason that I have ventured to approach you with this suggestion of mine. May I hear from you?

With deep and affectionate regards,

U.G. KRISHNAMURTI

U.G. typed the address on an envelope and made it ready for mailing. He came out of his chalet and dropped the letter in the mailbox on his way for a walk. On his walk he recalled his experience in the Casino de Paris night club. He felt it was spontaneous and he accepted it partly as apocryphal, leaving the rest for future verification. He began to take stock and evaluate the series of strange events that had occurred ever since he had come to the Saanen Valley, which he had named the "incubation period".

He returned from his walk and rested in his room. Valentine was busy in the kitchen. U.G. was more serene and tranquil than normal. His mental horizon seemed to be airborne to be transformed into a different state of being.

52. The Calamity

That evening, as usual, he saw his friends. Douglas was present and active in the discussions. Someone informed that Krishnaji was coming again to Saanen. U.G. did not react.

From Paris, Krishnaji went to Amsterdam and stayed there for a few days. After spending three days in Germany, in July 1967, he came to Saanen and stayed in Chalet Tannegg. A large of number of his admirers from different places came there to listen to him.

One friend of U.G. jokingly called those meetings the "Krishnamurti circus". Someone pointed out, 'Now, there is no fee to attend the circus. U.G., why don't you join us?'

U.G. kept mysteriously silent. It was not his usual silence. His face turned grim. He appeared like an actor prepared for a final showdown in a pivotal role in the drama of life.

Douglas and other friends assumed that U.G. was reluctant to attend Krishnaji's talk and took leave of him. U.G. looked strangely at Douglas while he was leaving. There was an undivided attention, as if he had become a different person. A profound silence reigned.

The next morning, U.G. did not go for his routine walk but was sitting alone in his room. The golden rays of the morning sun brightened the room. The aroma of distant flowers was wafting through the room off and on. All of a sudden, U.G. came out of the room and started walking – he had decided to attend Krishnaji's talk. He walked briskly, just like a bird perching on a tree branch suddenly flew away. What prompted him to go to Krishnaji's talk?

U.G. was not weighed down by turbulent thoughts; his inner faculties transmuted into a tranquil and peaceful state like the bottom of a lake. His mind became transparent.

The sun was mounting on the sky. The snow in the hillocks shone duly in the golden light with a peculiar phosphorescence. There was a riot of hollyhocks stocks and flower bushes; they filled the morning air with heady scents. U.G. ambled through sniffing the flower scents. He crossed the bridge to the other side of the river and reached the place of Krishnaji's talks.

Just as a number of animals reach a lake to quench their thirst, listeners were arriving at the tent where Krishnaji was about to speak. Krishnaji addressed them in his familiar manner.

He talked about "movement", "awareness" and "silence": 'In that silence there is no mind; there is no action.' Krishnaji was expounding his views to the accompaniment of gestures. U.G. stood outside the tent and listened. Hearing Krishnamurti, he began to feel uneasy. He was almost as much disturbed as he was physically uncomfortable; the

delicate skin of his face twitched. He felt as if caterpillars were crawling all over his body and as if he was under the embrace of a python. A great aversion ensued. Shaking his head in disgust he pushed his way out.

U.G. began to divert his attention to the natural surroundings there. It suddenly struck him that for a long time he had been in such a state of being. The state Krishnaji was talking about was not simply Krishnaji's own state; he was describing U.G.'s state of being. U.G. said to himself, 'I am in that state. Why the hell have I been listening to him?'

U.G. was standing still, about to move again. For the last time, U.G. threw out categorically and unambiguously the spiritual supremacy of Krishnaji, and left the place for his chalet. He walked back with his head high in an air of sublime authority, with a firm, quick step, every part of the soles of his feet touching the ground majestically.

U.G. walked briskly toward his chalet. There was no space between him and Mother Nature. He became the personification of the oneness with the mother earth. He was a part and parcel of nature. He moved like a walking tree. The whole nature walked behind him in tandem. He strolled back through the ilex hedge to the chalet.

* * * * * * * * * * *

U.G. was sitting in his room all alone like a king conducting a secret meeting with his ministers. He was now flooded with a number of thoughts.

He thought to himself, 'Without my awareness and volition I have been in a non-dual state for a long time. Why was I not aware of it before? Accidentally, when I visited Krishnaji today and heard his words, then I came to know that I am already in that state. If I had not gone to listen to him, could I have known it?'

'I have come to know it after it was mentioned by someone else. That only shows that the identity of the state was learned from another person. In fact, I should have known it independent of other people referring to it or describing it. What is that state, in the first place?'

Years ago, in 1939, Ramana Maharshi challenged him, saying, 'I can give it to you, but can you take it?' In 1955, when he asked Krishnaji, 'Is there is anything behind the abstractions which you are throwing at us?' Krishnaji replied emphatically, 'You have no way of knowing it for yourself.' These seem to indicate that what they had were merely their personal experiences, and that may be meaningful truths for them but not necessarily for others.

U.G. continued to think, 'I have asked myself the same question, "What is that state?" for the last forty grueling years. I have been searching and struggling continuously for the answer. Now my question is, "How do I know that I am already in such a state?" That indicates that the same old question has been transformed into the present question. It's like being on a merry-go-round.'

The question constantly haunted him. He was able to notice a distinction between all the accumulated knowledge gathered about that state and the questioner himself who hankers after that experience independent of the knowledge. U.G. was plunged in doubt. 'If the knowledge depends upon others, it is second hand information which is worthless.'

The questioning process in U.G. continued, 'Now I feel that I am in that non-dual state mentioned by the ancient texts and by Buddha, Mahavira, Jesus, Mohammed, Ramana Maharshi and others. Yes, I am already in that state of being. But without the help and dependence on others' knowledge, how can I myself know that my present state of being is that state? The knowledge and experience I have about that state together are confirming my view. But is there any possibility to recognize that state without either of the two?'

U.G. had the following soliloquy:

> Look here, old chap, after forty years you have not moved one step; you are there in square number one. It is the same knowledge that projected your mind there when you asked this question. You are in the same situation asking the same question, "How do I know?" because it is this knowledge, the description of the state by those people, that has created this state for you. You are kidding yourself. You are a damned fool.[97] (p. 19)

U.G. concluded,

> There is some kind of peculiar division inside of me: there is somebody who knows that he is in that state. The knowledge of that state – what I have read, what I have experienced, what they have talked about – it is this knowledge that is looking at that state, so it is only this knowledge that has projected that state. (p. 19)

U.G. had no answer to the question, 'How do I know that this is that state?

* * * * * * * * * * * *

That evening, U.G. continued the narration of his autobiography to Valentine. It was coming to a close. He concluded, 'Later I came to Paris from London and spent 90 days enjoying 80 varieties of cheese. When my pocket was almost empty, I left for Zurich. But thanks to a cab driver's mistake, I reached Geneva instead of Zurich. In Geneva, when I was unable to meet the hotel bill, I approached the Indian Vice-Consul and requested him to repatriate me to India. I encountered generosity in the form of an extraordinary lady who had changed my entire life. The rest of the story you know well,' said U.G. with an enchanting smile.

Valentine also smiled and completed the recording. She decided to get the autobiography of U.G. bound and preserved.

On that day, U.G.'s friends did not turn up in the evening as usual. He finished his light dinner early and, sitting alone, pondered deeply once again about his doubt. 'How do I know that this is that state?'

He woke up the next morning. The same question posed itself as if he had gone to bed with it: 'How do I know that this is the state?' Slowly he came out from the chalet and sat on a bench in the shade of a chestnut tree, over-looking one of the most beautiful spots in the whole world, the seven hills and valleys of Saanen.

The fundamental question was constantly burning in U.G. The hidden flames inside the deep volcano were getting ready to kick off and spread in all directions. It was like a question in a vortex. It went on and on for sometime.

> Then *suddenly* the question disappeared. Nothing happened; the question just disappeared. I didn't say to myself "Oh, my God! Now I have found the answer." Even that state disappeared ~ the state I thought I was in, the state of Buddha, Jesus ~ even that has disappeared. The question has disappeared. The whole thing is finished for me, and that's all, you see. From then on, never did I say to myself "Now I have the answer to all those questions." That state of which I had said "This is the state" ~ that state disappeared. The question disappeared. Finished, you see. It is not emptiness, it is not blankness, it is not the void, it is not any of those things; the question disappeared suddenly, and that is all. (*Ibid.)*

Here the editor of the *Mystique* comments:

> The disappearance of his fundamental question, on discovering that it had no answer, was a physiological phenomenon, UG says, 'a sudden "explosion" inside, blasting, as it were, every cell, every nerve and every gland in my body.' And with that 'explosion' the illusion that there is continuity of thought, that there is a center, an "I," linking up the thoughts, was not there any more. (*Ibid.)*

U.G. says,

> Then thought cannot link up. The linking gets broken and once it is broken, it is finished. Then it is not once that thought explodes; every time a thought arises, it explodes. So this continuity comes to an end and thought falls into its natural rhythm. (*Ibid.)*

The myriad questions that had bothered him for the last forty years were dumped in one fell swoop. All the logical, metaphysical, spiritual, philosophical questions and quests were burnt out like tiny worms in flames. The question, 'Why are there no questions now?' also disappeared. There was no one to ask a question and no one to answer. Thus, U.G. got released from the prison of questions. Describing himself, U.G. said,

> ...because no question of any kind can stay there any more. The only questions that remained are very simple and easy questions necessary to function in this world. "How do I go to Hyderabad," or "Where is the airport" – and people have answers for these questions. (*Ibid.)*

In that explosion, everything in his head had "tightened". There was no room for anything there inside his brain.

> So, these *vasanas* (past impressions) or whatever you call them – they do try to show their heads sometimes, but then the brain cells are so 'tight' that it has no opportunity to fool around there any more. The division cannot stay there – it's a physical impossibility; you don't have to do a thing about it, you see. That is why I say that when this 'explosion' takes place (I use the word 'explosion' because it's like a nuclear explosion) it leaves behind chain-reactions. Every cell in your body, the cells in the very marrow of your bones, have to undergo this 'change' – I don't want to use that word – it's an *irreversible* change. There's no question of your going back. There's no question of a 'fall' for this man at all. *Irreversible:* an alchemy of some sort.
>
> It is like a nuclear explosion, you see – it shatters the whole body. It is not an easy thing; it's the end of the man – such a shattering thing that it blasts every cell, every nerve in your body. I went through this terrible physical torture at that moment. Not that you experience the 'explosion'; you can't experience the 'explosion' – but its after effects, the 'fallout', is the thing that changes the whole chemistry of your body. (p. 20)
>
> The after-effects of that ('explosion'), the way the senses are operating now without any co-ordinator or center – that's all I can say. Another thing: the chemistry has changed – I can say that because unless that alchemy or change in the whole chemistry takes place, there is no way of freeing this organism from thought, from the continuity of thought. So, since there is no continuity of thought, you can very easily say that something has happened, but what actually has happened? I have no way of experiencing this at all.' (pp 20-21)
>
> This is a thing that has happened outside the field, the area in which I expected, dreamed and wanted to change, so I don't call this a 'change'. I really don't know what has happened to me. What I am telling you is the way I am functioning. There seems to be some difference between the way you are functioning and the way I am functioning, but basically there cannot be any difference. How can there be any difference between you and me? There can't be; but from the way we are trying to express ourselves, there seems to be. I have the feeling that there is some difference and what that difference is, is all that I am trying to understand.' (p. 21)

It so happened that the nuclear explosion occurred on his birthday, according to the Telugu almanac. It was 12th August 1967. Every seven years U.G. inevitably undergoes a change and this was the eighth septennial cycle.

53. The Terminal Flash

On the Eighth day:[98] On that day, U.G. was sitting on the sofa and suddenly there was an earthquake-like event, a volcano busted out:

> ... suddenly there was an outburst of tremendous energy ~ *tremendous energy* shaking the whole body, and along with the body, the sofa, the chalet and the whole universe, as it were ~ shaking, vibrating. You can't create that movement at all. It was sudden. Whether it was coming from outside or inside, from below or above, I don't know ~ I couldn't locate the spot; it was all over. It lasted for hours and hours. (*Mystique,* p.25)

Whenever he sat it would start again; the vibration was like an epileptic fit. Everyday the process went on. The vibrations created in him by the energy made him unprotected; there were tremors in every joint and limb of his body. The volcanic dance of energy touched every corner and every particle of the body. The body could not withstand the explosion of energy; yet there was no way to resist it.

Behind the neck there were severe sensations and a terrible vibration in the medulla and in the nerves on either side of the neck. From the bottom of the spine an electric energy crawled up violently through the bones and entered the skull like a rocket and zoomed out.

The entire machinery of the body underwent violent commotion. U.G. was not a strong person; it was a miracle that he could withstand such an explosion of energy. There was no way to stop it.

From where was this indeterminate energy generated? Was it an outburst of energy embedded in the chemistry of cells? It occurred automatically, spontaneously, and involuntarily.

After sometime, the tidal wave of energy in him began to abate, just like there is calm after a cyclonic havoc. After the outpour of the energy ran its course, U.G. became extremely weak.

The outburst of energy was like a great cascade. The energy had a peculiar operation of its own. It whirled clockwise, anticlockwise in his whole body. It gave him a feeling that it enveloped him and descended on him. Every time it was new, every time it came on in a different way.

Everyday, U.G. underwent this painful process intermittently. In the present condition, U.G. had not moved out of his bed for three days. He had a temporary relief, but the energy movements resumed. In this process, the whole anatomy of his body was changing. The movements of his hands had changed and would automatically twist backwards. His hand movements or gesticulations changed in the manner of *mudras.*[99]

U.G.'s wrist joints had terrible pains, and then there were pains even in the marrow of the bones. Every cell started changing. And the sex hormones started changing. He did

not know whether he was a man or woman. Suddenly he developed a breast on his left side.

It was an excruciating torture for the body all the way. The torrential energy continued to upset him. This volcanic outburst of energy continued on and off for six months. In the process, his whole body became pulverized.

This process, is sometimes referred to as the "awakening of the Kundalini" power in the ancient Hindu texts. Somehow U.G. survived the process. U.G. refers to the events that had happened to him during the summer of 1967 as the "Calamity".

He calls it a "calamity"

> ...because from the point of view of one who thinks this is something fantastic, blissful, full of beatitude, love, ecstasy and all that kind of a thing, this is physical torture – this is a calamity from that point of view. Not a calamity to me, but a calamity to those who have an image that something *marvelous* is going to happen. (p. 24.)

While U.G. was undergoing this trauma, he was faced with another strange phenomenon, that is, the "death experience". Of course, death is not something that can be experienced. You could say it's a state in which actual death takes place.

Experience of death is traditionally termed "the great forgetfulness"[100]. But the death of U.G. cannot be described in these terms because it misleads one to believe that it's some kind of experience. Just for lack of a better term it's called a 'death experience'.

To the onlookers his body would appear to be dead. His legs and hands would become cold; his body would become stiff; the breathing and heart-beat would stop; and there would seem to be no trace of life in him. It would be literally death except for the fact that the vital forces would automatically become active again in the body after some time. After becoming "lifeless" for some time, spontaneously there would be a movement in the body. Slowly every limb would come to its normal function – "life hits back". U.G. sometimes says that in such a condition, 'clinical death takes place.'

While he was in that state U.G. could have no consciousness let alone knowledge of what happened inside the body. There was nobody there to have an experience of it and later describe it.

In the process of the recovery from such a state the movements of his body resembled those of an infant. U.G. understood this process as "an act of restoration". The body adjusted itself to its natural state.

The process of "dying" varied from time to time. Similarly, while undergoing the revival process, his movements also changed from time to time. During this period, U.G. discovered that he had acquired new ways not only of walking, sitting, sleeping and holding his arms; but Indian and Chinese postures and gestures (like in Hatha yoga and Taichi Chuan) came naturally to him, as did the gestures which could be noticed

in the statues of the Buddha. Probably as a result of hormonal changes, his left breast developed until it looked like a thirteen-year-old girl's breast, and he had also acquired a feminine quality. In the Hindu ancient texts this phenomenon is known as "*ardha nariswara*[101]".

U.G. had a long history of brushes with death ever since he was a child. When he was four-years-old, in 1922, U.G. had juvenile convulsions three times and escaped death. The third time everyone lost hope in his being revived, and he was laid on a mat on the floor. The body became stiff then too, but after sometime, there was movement in his limbs and he was revived. People considered him as "one who has conquered death".[102] While he was studying in school and also while in college in Machilipatnam, a few times he become suddenly unconscious. Either from the water that was sprinkled on him or otherwise, he regained his consciousness. People around him thought it might have been a type of epileptic fit.

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54. The Aftermath

According to embryology, during embryo genesis, when the embryo is formed, the first stage is the development of "skin". The senses of taste, smell, vision and hearing develop later in that sequence. The senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing were lost in five successive days in U.G in the same sequence. These sense organs receded into their embryonic state. The similarity between the chronology of the development of the senses *in utero* and the chronology of their disappearance in U.G. is striking.

All the glands underwent permanent change in U.G. due to the chemical change in his body. The thymus gland is the most important of all. Ancient Hindu texts call it *Anahata*. Ramana Maharshi called it the "second heart" and fixed its location in the centre of the chest cavity.

According to scientists, the thymus gland functions in an extraordinary way in an individual between the ages of seven and fourteen years. But after attaining puberty, it becomes dormant. In U.G., after the chemical changes and subsequent physiological mutation, the thymus is believed to have become reactivated. Hence all the "feelings" are there, but not feelings as we normally know them.

> Feelings are not thoughts, not emotions; you *feel* for somebody. If somebody *hurts* himself *there,* that hurt is felt *here* –not as a pain, but there is a feeling, you see – you automatically say "Ah!" (p. 27.)

The person is affected by everything that is happening within the field of his consciousness.

The pituitary gland is called "*ajna chakra* or "third eye" which "commands" everything. This and other glands have changed in U.G. irreversibly. The *ajna chakra* now gives the commands to the body without the interference of thought, which normally acts as an amour around man so that he is not affected by things around him.

There were also changes in the nerve centers. These radical changes manifested themselves in different colored swellings on surface of U.G.'s body.

> Up and down his torso, neck and head, at those points which Indian holy men call *chakras*, his friends observed swellings of various shapes and colors, which came and went at intervals. On his lower abdomen the swellings were horizontal, cigar-shaped bands. Above the navel was a hard, almond-shaped swelling. A hard, blue swelling, like a large medallion, in the middle of his chest was surmounted by another smaller, brownish-red, medallion-shaped swelling at the base of his throat. These two 'medallions' were as though suspended from a varicolored, swollen ring – blue, brownish and light yellow – around his neck, as in pictures of the Hindu gods. There were also other similarities between the swellings and the depictions of Indian religious art: his throat was swollen to a shape that made his chin seem to rest on the head of a cobra, as in the

> traditional images of Siva; just above the bridge of the nose was a white lotus-shaped swelling; all over the head the small blood vessels expanded, forming patterns like the stylized lumps on the heads of Buddha statues. Like the horns of Moses and the Taoist mystics, two large, hard swellings periodically came and went. The arteries in his neck expanded and rose, blue and snake-like, into his head. (*Editor's note* in the *Mystique*, pp. 26-27)

The half-blossomed lotus-like shape that appeared between his eyebrows is called *phala netra*[103] in the ancient texts and is found in the images of Lord Siva.

The gestures and gesticulations of U.G. had also changed. His hands displayed the *jñana mudra* as is seen in Tathagata Buddha sculptures.

From his childhood U.G. had had a number of marks and moles on different parts of his body. All the old ones had now disappeared giving place to new ones.

After the physiological overhaul, U.G. regained his youth. Although he was forty-nine-years-old, he looked like a youth of twenty-five years. All these manifestations began to subside gradually in course of time.

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The Ash Phenomenon: As part of the process, U.G.'s body began to shed a soft and white powder-like substance. U.G. described this phenomenon as follows:

> Since there is nobody who uses this thought as a self-protective mechanism, it burns itself up. Thought undergoes combustion, ionization (if I may use your scientific term). Thought is, after all, vibration. So, when this kind of ionization of thought takes place, it throws out, sometimes it covers the whole body with, an ash-like substance. Your body is covered with that when there is no need for thought at all. When you don't *use* it, what happens to that thought? It burns itself out – that is the energy – it's a combustion. The body gets heated, you know. There is tremendous heat in the body as a result of this, and so the skin is covered – your face, your feet, everything – with this ash-like substance. (p.28.)

In Saivism, ash occupies an important place. Lord Siva's body is said to be covered with ash. Ash has importance in Christianity also. The Christians celebrates a festival called Lent. On Ash Wednesday, the first day of this festival, the priest smears ash on the forehead of devotees and says 'O, man, you are born from ash and after death you turn to ash again. Remember it.'

Consequent to the chemical changes in his body and his biological mutation, all the accrued memories, afflictions and impressions completely vanished. All the knowledge accumulated during the forty nine years of U.G.'s life was erased from his consciousness. Now the consciousness of U.G. became empty, void. In that declutched state, he was unable to recall anything. He was like an "empty cassette".
One day, U.G. said, 'Valentine, All my powers are gone!' She replied casually, 'Don't worry; you never had any powers in the first place.'

U.G.'s senses began functioning independently of one another without a coordinator linking them. He had to relearn everything like a baby. All his knowledge, however, was in the background; it just wasn't in the forefront of his consciousness. He had to ask Valentine about everything. He would look at a flower and ask her, 'What is this?' She would reply, 'It's a flower.' He would again look at a cow and ask her, 'What is this?' She would say, 'It's a cow.'

Valentine was puzzled by what was happening to U.G. She even went to a see psychiatrist in Geneva. The psychiatrist wanted to see him before he would gave any opinion. But U.G. brushed aside the idea saying that understanding what he was going through was beyond the scope of medical science.

One day, U.G. consulted Desikachari, who was there at Saanen at the time, to see if he would suggest some yogic exercises to restore his body to normalcy. Desikachari examined U.G. but could not suggest any solution. He said it was beyond his comprehension and advised U.G. to consult his father, Krishnamachari, in Madras.

U.G. and Valentine went to Madras and consulted Krishnamachari. It was the first time for that great teacher to come across such phenomena as U.G. had been experiencing. He suggested some exercises to be done daily. Under his supervision U.G. practiced the prescribed yogic exercises, observing the diet requirements. But there was no change in his condition.

While he was in Madras, U.G.'s youngest daughter Usha came to see him after many years. After a few days, they all went to Hyderabad and then to the village of Mulugu in Warangal district, Andhra Pradesh, where Sitaramayya, U.G.'s father, was living at the time. After spending a few hours with him, U.G. returned to Hyderabad, dropped Usha off there and left for Madras. Later, U.G. and Valentine returned to Saanen via London.

In course of time, U.G.'s twisted hands regained their normal position. Whether U.G. was in Europe or India, the manifestations of energy, however, persisted. Two or three times in a day he was in its grip. As usual, he would patiently endure the body pains. He routinely went through his death process also which would turn his body into a virtual corpse; and, of course, after sometime, U.G. would become alive and normal. From then on, both the energy outbursts and death process became a regular occurrence in his life.

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55. The "Washout"

An important part of the overhauling in the body of U.G. is the "spiritual washout" that had taken place in the field of his consciousness. The mighty deposits of "spiritual experiences" and thought memories accumulated over thousands of years have been transmitted through generations. That "collective and cumulative thought" which is an integral and inherited part of man from time immemorial was totally and completely washed out from U.G.'s consciousness.

In U.G.'s words,

> Consciousness has to flush itself out: it has to purge itself of *every* trace of holiness, *every* trace of unholiness, *everything*. Even what you consider "sacred and holy" is a contamination in that consciousness. It is not through any volition of yours; when once the frontiers are broken – not through any effort of yours, not through any volition of yours – then the floodgates are open and everything goes out. In that process of flushing out, you have all these visions. ... suddenly you yourself, the whole consciousness, takes the shape of Buddha, Jesus, Mahavira, prophet Mohammed, Socrates – only those who have come into 'this state', not great men, not the leaders of mankind.
>
> One of them was a colored man (not exactly a colored man), and during that time I could tell people how he looked. Then some woman with breasts, flowing hair – naked. I was told that there were two saints here in India – Akkamahadevi and Lalleswari – they were women, naked women. Suddenly you have these two breasts, the flowing hair – even the organs change into female organs. (p. 29)

U.G. goes on to say:

> But still there is a division there – you, and the form the consciousness has assumed, the form of Buddha, say, or Jesus Christ or God knows what – the same situation: "How do I know I am in that state?" But that division cannot stay long; it disappears and something else comes. Hundreds of people – probably something happened to so many hundreds of people. This is part of history – so many *rishis*, some Westerners, monks, so many women, and sometimes very strange things. You see, all that people have experienced before you is part of your consciousness. I use the expression "the saints go marching out"; in Christianity they have a hymn "When the Saints Go Marching In." They run out of your consciousness because they cannot stay there any more, because all that is impurity, a contamination there. (*ibid*.)
>
> All these visions and everything were happening for three years after the "calamity." Now the whole thing is finished. The divided state of consciousness cannot function at all any more; it is always in the undivided state of consciousness – nothing can touch that. Anything can happen – the thought can be a good thought, a bad thought, the telephone number of a London

prostitute.... During my wanderings in London, I used to look at those telephone numbers fixed to the trees. I was not interested in going to the prostitute, but those things, the numbers, interested me. ... One number gets fixed in there, it comes there, it repeats itself. It doesn't matter what comes there ~ good, bad, holy, unholy. Who is there to say "This is good; that is bad?" ~ the whole thing is finished. That is why I have to use the phrase 'religious experience' (not in the sense in which you use the word 'religion'): it puts you back to the source. You are back in that primeval, primordial, pure state of consciousness ~ call it 'awareness' or whatever you like. In that state things are happening, and there is nobody who is interested, nobody who is looking at them. They come and go in their own way, like the Ganges water flowing: the sewerage water comes in, half-burnt corpses, both good things and bad things ~ everything ~ but that water is always pure. (p. 30.)

You can say (I can't make any definite statement) probably it is because of the impact on the human consciousness of the 'explosions' of all those saints, sages and saviors of mankind that there is this dissatisfaction in you, that whatever is there is all the time trying to burst out, as it were. Maybe that is so ~ I can't say anything about it. You can say that they are there because they are pushing you to this point, and once the purpose is achieved they have finished their job and they go way ~ that is only speculation on my part. But this flushing out of everything good and bad, holy and unholy, sacred and profane has got to happen, otherwise your consciousness is *still* contaminated, *still* impure. During that time it goes on and on and on ~ there are hundreds and thousands of them ~ then, you see, you are put back into that primeval, primordial state of consciousness. Once it has become pure, *of and by itself,* then nothing can touch it, *nothing* can contaminate that any more. All the past up to that point is there, but it cannot influence your actions any more. (*ibid*.)

The consciousness is so pure that whatever you are doing in the direction of purifying that consciousness is adding impurity to it. (p. 29.)

* * *

David Barry is American, was fortunate (or destined) to witness this “saints go marching out” phenomenon. U.G. used to ask him information about his visions, such as who such and such a person was who looked that way, by describing the features of that person. Luckily, David Barry was well versed in Hindu, Greek, Chinese and other myths. So he was able to interpret and comment on these visions. He would look for parallels in those myths for the things that had happened to U.G. Once, U.G. declared, ‘David Barry is the only man who is my first and last disciple.’

The last person who appeared in the vision of U.G. was Sri Aurobindo, the sage of Pondicherry who had died on 5th December 1950. All the spiritual personalities who attained their Natural State in their own way were already dead when they appeared to U.G., except Jiddu Krishnamurti (Krishnaji) who had appeared on 4th November 1979, the full moon day of Kartika, in Bangalore. U.G. said about that:

> This was not a vision, nor was it a dream. I never have dreams. J.K. appeared in person. He looked at me and said "Old chap, your teaching is too radical and too revolutionary. Water it down."

U.G. told him, 'Get lost!' and he disappeared.

One day in 1968, when U.G. was once living in the Tirthangudi Coffee estate in Chikkamangaluru of Karnataka around, suddenly a scene presented itself to U.G. It was not quite a vision nor was it a dream. It was as though it had actually occurred in front of his eyes. Three sages with hoary heads and beards stood in the middle of a big lake, submerged in water to their necks. They stretched their arms toward U.G. and cried, 'U.G., we are drowning; please save us.'

'Who are you?' U.G. asked them.

'We are your ancestors. Hurry up and save us,' they begged. Then U.G. understood that they were the founder sages of his clan and their names were Atreyasa, Archanana and Shyavashva.

U.G. said to them, 'You deserve the punishment. Drown and never rise again!'

Then, helpless, they drowned and the vision ended.

U.G. said with this ended all the visions that started after the "Calamity". Thousands of "spiritual personalities" appeared in U.G.'s visions over a period of three years.

* * *

'How do we explain this? Why do such accidental events occur? Why do they happen only to someone like U.G.? One day, in Bangalore, Brahmachariji, a close friend of U.G., started reciting the Ganapati Upanishad. U.G. sat on a rug on the floor in the lotus posture. Brahmachariji sat facing U.G. The recitation went on for about twenty minutes.

All that time, U.G. sat motionless with eyes closed, in the lotus position. According to Chandrasekhar, U.G. said later:

> I feel as if the sounds of the *mantras* are coming out of myself. I had the experience of the sound going around in circles with a sort of rhythm and spreading throughout my consciousness.

He then demonstrated those circular movements with hand gestures.

> Suddenly all that took the shape of Ganapati. In my consciousness my face became the face of Ganapati. My nose stretched and drooped down like an elephant trunk. Then, as though something snapped, the movement stopped.

> The form was erased. Perhaps there was some mistake in your recitation at that point. (*Stopped in Our Tracks,* pp. 135-6.)

Brahmachariji admitted that it was true. He said that he forgot the *mantra* at a certain place and repeated the rest of the *mantra* to the end without errors.

Now U.G. said,

> Now it's all correct. There are no gaps in the movement. Everything is quite rhythmical. The sage who wrote that Upanishad must have been reflected here in my consciousness because of the sounds.

The thought of the sage who wrote the Upanishad hundreds or thousands of years ago took the form of the sage and appeared in U.G.'s consciousness. A thrilling aspect – how is it possible?

> U.G. explains this process in terms if modern physics. According to it, sound waves can be transformed into electromagnetic waves and those in turn into light waves. The light waves can again be transformed back into sound waves. But all that is achieved through scientific instruments. Perhaps in the case of U.G. all that is possible without the help of those instruments.
>
> The sage's existence must somehow be embedded in the *mantras* created by him, in their sound. U.G. said pointing to himself, 'Because there is no division here, all those sounds, along with the form imbedded in them have echoed in my consciousness.' (*Ibid,* pp. 136)

* *

'Why are all these great seers and sages from all over the world buried in the ocean of human consciousness?' once Douglas asked. U.G. replied;

> This humanity will probably destroy itself. When that is about to happen, as it has in the past, Nature draws many into this state as a way of preserving herself. If that is to happen now, it must come from the west. In the east it is dead.

When the same question came up for discussion once again, U.G. replied from another angle:

> All those past religious people's experiences may be blocking the individual to attain the Natural State. I cannot be sure of it. But it seems so.

* * *

56. Life After...

The extraordinary physiological changes continued to occur for years. U.G. was so baffled by what had happened to him that he did not speak for a year after the 'Calamity'. He had to literally learn to think and talk all over again, so drastic was his mutation. After a year or so, he regained most of his communicative powers. Yet he did not say much.

'What is there to say after a thing like this?' U.G. asked himself. One day the answer came in a flash, 'I will say it exactly the way it is.'

Barring for a year's break in the late sixties, U.G. has been speaking tirelessly ever since, particularly of the way he functions.

> The human race will somehow survive. But the only thing that one can do is to free himself, because it is a pure, unsullied and uncontaminated consciousness that is operating. So, it is bound to affect all those who come into its orbit. You don't have to do a thing. You can sit in one corner of the world, yet it is bound to affect the whole of human consciousness, because it [consciousness everywhere] is the same; it is exactly the same. It has no frontiers; it has no boundaries. So, it [consciousness here] is bound to affect the whole human consciousness. That is why I say that this so-called religious experience is an explosion. When this explosion takes place it is bound to affect the whole of human consciousness. You cannot measure it. It is not a thing to measure and statistically prove that so many people have been benefited by it. It is a very slow process. It takes time.
>
> And this happens to one in a million. Not because of what he does or does not do; but because it just happens. You call it grace, chance or ....
>
> (from Exerpts from Dialogues, in *Stopped in Our Tracks* on U.G.'s web page.)

* * *

Sometimes, during the day, U.G.'s friends would come and sit on the lawn in the front yard of the chalet where U.G. and Valentine lived. There was usually someone new arriving while someone else was getting ready to leave. One evening, there was a most soft and radiant peace in which his friends reposed. Douglas asked U.G. about it.

U.G. replied:

> There is always peace there inside of you. It is always there waiting, but you do not let that operate. You have learned peace, bliss, beatitude and you are that movement toward what you know and want. What you arrive at is yourself. The experience of peace is not the peace that passes understanding which is your 'Natural State'. When real peace comes, you will not become a slow corpse like

> the spiritual seekers. Then there will be an explosion of energy, a volcano. But you want to get away from that, to go somewhere, to question and explain things, to reach out and thus continue. Anything you do is the movement away from it.

Further he added:

> Every time thought is born you are born. There is a gap between thoughts, but you cannot live in it. So you cannot let thought go because that is your continuity. Without that you are going to die and you cannot face death. But life and death have no separation. One does not begin where the other ends. "Are you even born?" Can you tell me that? There is no death for you to preside over and then go to heaven or transmigrate or reincarnate your soul. You are the experience of the activity of making yourself up, and by that activity you continue. You are a protective mechanism and if you go to the very bottom of it, you will find only fear.

U.G. elucidated on peace on a different occasion:

> You can never understand the tremendous peace that is always there within you; that is your natural state. Your trying to create a peaceful state of mind is in fact creating disturbance within you. You can only talk of peace, create a state of mind and say to yourself that you are very peaceful but that is not peace; that is violence. So there is no use in practicing peace, there is no reason to practice silence. Real silence is explosive: it is not the dead state of mind that spiritual seekers think: 'oh, I am at peace with myself! There is silence, a tremendous silence, I experience silence' – that does not mean anything at all. This is volcanic in its nature, it's bubbling all the time – the energy, the life – that is its quality. You may ask how I know, I do not know. Life is aware of itself, if we can put it that way it is conscious of itself. (*Mystique,* p. 39.)

* * * * * * * * * * *

Once U.G. said:

> Ask what it is you can do for yourself, and if you have an answer, you have not understood my question.

* * * * * * * * * *

One day, his friends assembled in Saanen. As usual they were engaged in discussing some spiritual matters. At the end of the meeting U.G. said,

> If people come and ask me questions, I will answer. If they don't, it makes no difference to me. I have not set myself up in the holy business of liberating people. I have no particular message for mankind, except to say that all holy systems for obtaining enlightenment are bunk and all talk of arriving at psychological mutation through "awareness" is poppycock. Psychological

mutation is impossible. The "Natural State" can only happen through biological mutation.

Whatever has happened to me has happened despite everything I did. Whatever I did or did not do and whatever events people believed led me into this are totally irrelevant. It is very difficult for me to fix a point now and tell myself that this is me and look back and try to find out the cause for whatever happened to me. That is why I am emphasizing all the time that it is acausal. It is something like, to use my favorite phrase, lightning hitting you. But one thing I can say with certainty is that the very thing I searched for all my life was shattered to pieces. The goals that I had set for myself, self-realization, God-realization, transformation, radical or otherwise, were all false. And there was nothing there to be realized and nothing to be found there. The very demand to be free from anything, even from the physical needs of the body, just disappeared. And I was left with nothing. Therefore, whatever comes out of me now depends on what you draw out of me.

I have actually and factually nothing to communicate, because there is no communication possible at any level. The only instrument we have is the intellect. We know in a way that this instrument has not helped us to understand anything. So when once it dawns on you that is not the instrument and there is no other instrument to understand anything, you are left with this puzzling situation that there is nothing to understand. In a way it would be highly presumptuous on my part to sit on a platform, accept invitations and try to tell people that I have something to say.

What I am left with is something extraordinary – extraordinary in the sense that it has been possible for me not through any effort, not through any volition of mine. Everything that every man thought, felt and experienced before has been thrown out of my system.

There is no teaching of mine and never shall be one. "Teaching" is not the word for it. A teaching implies a method or a system, a technique or a new way of thinking to be applied in order to bring about a transformation in your way of life. What I am saying is outside the field of teachability. It is simply a description of the way I am functioning. It is just a description of the natural state of man. That is the way you, stripped of the machinations of thought, are also functioning.

Your Natural State has no relationship whatsoever with the religious states of bliss, beatitude and ecstasy. They lie within the field of experience. Those who have led man on his search for religiousness throughout the centuries have perhaps experienced those religious states. So can you. They are thought-induced states of being and as they come, so do they go. The timeless can never be experienced, can never be grasped, contained, much less, given expression to by any man. That beaten track will lead you nowhere. There is no oasis situated yonder. You are stuck with the mirage.

57. The Seed beneath the Volcano

Conclusion

The whole spiritual history of mankind is genetically stored in each cell of the body. If the Natural State manifests itself anywhere, then inevitably it will get dissolved in the universal consciousness. Then the individual in whom it has manifested itself will have no separate existence or identification. There will not be a special entity.

Be that as it may, U.G.'s biography, *The Seed beneath the Volcano*, has come to an end. After U.G. stumbled into the Natural State, he has been touring the length and breadth of the world for more than thirty five years. He describes his unique state in his own fashion.

He emphatically declares his state as a chemical improbability, as acausal and as an unexpected good fortune. He thunders that salvation, liberation, self–realization and such are mere creations of the imagination. *Atma*, *Paramatma*, eternal bliss, beatitude, ecstasy are mirages.

He propounds his views from a new angle in an extraordinary manner. He is the originator of a radical revolution in the spiritual field. His journey of life is an endless story.

In every age there are a very few exceptionally revolutionary spiritual thinkers who hold the torch for the future. Perhaps U.G. is one among them, an epoch-making personality who is ahead of his time.

The question raised in the beginning of this biography remains unanswered: who is U.G? U.G. is an enigma. Catch him if you can. Good luck!

A Note on the Author

Rajasekhar Reddi hails from the agriculture family of Alluru and was born in Nellore in Andhra Pradesh on 20th June 1939. He is the one and only son of Sesha Reddy and Kameshwaramma. His primary and college education stretched over several places, Podili, Inkollu, Parchuru, Chilakaluripeta, A.C. College Guntur and Vivekavardhani College, Hyderabad. He did his postgraduate degree in Indology from Osmania University. He toured several cities in India as a Research Associate and interpreter of several German Scholars.

Later the author settled as an freelance journalist and copywriter for several advertisement companies. He was intimately acquainted with spiritual teachers like Jallamudi Amma, Jddu Krishnamurti and U.G. Krishnamurti, and was blessed by the Mother of Pondicherry, Sri Saradha Mata and a host of others.

He developed an eclectic philosophy of his own, thereby navigated his "spiritual odyssey" unaided and unguided. It's perhaps his unending quest.

He was married and blessed by two children; his family settled in New York. He lives alone in Yellareddi Guda in Hyderabad.

This is his first book and is followed by *The Kingdom of Allah* (Short Stories), *The Other Side of Islam* (Short Sketches) and *Caravanserai* (Autobiographical Musings), all of which are yet to be published.

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Notes

[1] In Hindu mythology gods are called *animeshas* ("those whose eyes do not blink").
[2] In Hindu classical literature they are called "spiritual tears" (Telugu: *adhyatmika baashpa kanaalu*).
[3] In yoga this posture is called *dhanurasana* (the posture of the bow).
[4] The Story of U.G.'s 'Calamity' is continued in Chapter 53.
[5] A *Taluq* is a subdivision of the area created by the British for revenue collecting purposes. A District (*Jilla)* is composed of several *Taluqs*.
[6] Kohlrabi.
[7] lit. "portion".
[8] A 16th century princess of Rajasthan, a devotee of Krishna, who refused to marry because she believed she was already married to Krishna.
[9] The 'lotus' posture in yoga.
[10] Lord Krishna's Birthday.
[11] The boy Krishna.
[12] An inn.
[13] Story-tellers who sing and tell stories of gods and goddesses from various myths.
[14] Pavilions.
[15] A pancake made with mung-bean batter.
[16] Initiation.
[17] Rosary.
[18] Worship of feet.
[19] The 11th day of the month in the lunar calendar.
[20] Spiritual practice.
[21] A demon in the garb of a human.
[22] Grandpa.
[23] 'There will be no famine where there is hard work.'
[24] Wayside inns.
[25] Salutations.
[26] A famous painter in the former princely state of Mysore.
[27] The "eight-limbed" yoga of Patanjali.
[28] "Robbing of Draupadi's Clothing."
[29] Spiritual practitioners.
[30] Pure Self.
[31] Reality, consciousness and bliss.
[32] Impressions (from past lives).
[33] Higher Self.
[34] The state of Union with the Universal Self; also described as a trance state.
[35] A point of highest achievement—"the extreme or utmost point".
[36] "Not this."
[37] Ultimate *samadhi* state, where there is no awareness of self.
[38] A person who, according to legend, lived 969 years.
[39] "King of Poets".
[40] Goparaju Ramachandra Rao.
[41] The dome or apex of a temple.
[42] The Goddess of Snake.
[43] A festival day of serpent worship.
[44] A person of an "untouchable" caste.
[45] A court official.
[46] An Afghan money-lender.
[47] House of Mirrors
[48] One of the four *ashramas* or stages of life of traditional Hinduism – a stage in which a person retires and lives in a forest with his family to pursue a spiritual life.
[49] "The six internal enemies", namely, *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, and *matsarya* (sensuous desire, anger, avarice, delusion, pride and jealousy, respectively)

[50] One who had "fallen" in yoga in a previous life,
[51] In Yoga this would be termed *pindasana*.
[52] Lord Shiva, the epitome of innocence, who bestows boons to all.
[53] World teachers.
[54] "Knower of Brahman," (an enlightened person).
[55] True Guru.
[56] "Worshipping the earth".
[57] An *anna* was 1/16th of a rupee, out of currency now.
[58] A horse buggy.
[59] Grandma.
[60] The sheath of the mind.
[61] '*Inta batuku batiki chivariki inti venakala padi chacchinatlu.*'
[62] Feeding the poor.
[63] This peculiar setup is called *illarikam* in Telugu.
[64] Compositions.
[65] The composition was Prakkala Nilabadi in the Raga Kharaharapriya in Tripura Tala.
[66] Orthodoxy; ancient tradition.
[67] A dhoti or loin cloth.
[68] A t-shirt.
[69] The proverb is: '*Asalu acharikanna nambi achare pedda namalu pedatadu*,' and means that the recent convert (into Vaishnavism) wears bigger (sectarian) marks on the forehead than the traditional follower. '*Achari*' is a term for a Vaishnavite in Telugu.
[70] From All Men Are Brothers: Life And Thoughts Of Mahatma Gandhi As Told In His Own Words. UNESCO. Paris, 1958. Pp. 50-51, 143.
[71] The name literally means "the Queen of dawn or dusk".
[72] A chest in which offerings to the deity such as money and jewelry are deposited.
[73] Consecrated food.
[74] A sweet snack made of chickpea flour and sugar.
[75] Extracted from the *Madras Talks,* 13 December 1953.
[76] Grandfather.
[77] Elder brother.
[78] Lit. "Mother". An endearing way of addressing a lady.
[79] Lit. "Uncle". A way of addressing an elder.
[80] An enlightened person.
[81] One (cosmopolitan) world or oneness of humanity.
[82] World teachers.
[83] North Indian term for "Good bye".
[84] "The purity of speech" – the power of soothsaying.
[85] A native game somewhat resembling cricket.
[86] Elder sister.
[87] "*Appa*" means father in Tamil.
[88] A small gold ornament tied by the groom around the bride's neck as an insignia of marriage.
[89] "Sister."
[90] '*Krishito nasti durbhiksham*' in Sanskrit.
[91] "*Pidukki biyyaniki oke mantram pedatadu.*"
[92] A woman whose husband is still alive.
[93] *Ajagara vratam* ("a python penance")
[94] "*Sura mandira taru mula nivasaha*
Sayya bhutala majinam vasaha
Sarva parigraha bhoga tyagaha
Kasya sukham na karoti viragah" in Sanskirt.

[95] His significant contributions, made after 1931, were inspired by a Balinese dance troupe. His theory of the theater was published in 1938 in the book *The Theater and Its Double*. (English translation of title.)

According to Artaud, the theater in the Western world had been devoted to a very narrow range of human experience, primarily the psychological problems of the individual and social problems. To Artaud, the more important aspects of existence are those submerged in the unconscious, those that cause divisions within the individual and between people and lead to hatred, violence and destruction. He believed that if given a proper theatrical expression, man could be freed from his aggression and can then experience joy which civilization has forced him to repress, for theater can flush out those feelings which are usually expressed in more destructive ways. Or, as Artaud put it, 'the theater has been created to drain abscesses collectively.'

Artaud was certain that his goals could not be reached through appeals to the rational mind. Rather it would be necessary to operate directly upon the senses, for the conscious mind has been conditioned to sublimate many human impulses, and to break down the audience's defenses. Artaud sometimes referred to this as the "theater of cruelty" since in order to achieve its ends it would have to force the audience to comfort itself.

Artaud suggested many innovations in theatrical practice. Among these was the replacement of the traditional theater building with remodeled barns, factories or air plane hangars. He wished to locate acting areas in streete corners, on catwalks and along the walls. He was much impressed by Eastern practices and argued that the west needed to develop symbolic and ritualistic devices similar to those used in the Orient.

[96] "Joy through sorrow".

[97] This and the following quotes are from *The Mystique of Enlightenment*.

[98] The following continues the story of U.G.' Calamity from Chapter 2.

[99] **G**estures as in yoga and classical Indian dance.

[100] *Maha vismarana*.

[101] Half-man, half-woman ~ one of the descriptions of Siva.

[102] *Mrithyum-jaya*.

[103] "**T**he eye on the forehead."